

100 GREAT INDIANS  
THROUGH THE AGES

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*The change is essential but continuity is also necessary The future is to be built on the foundations laid on the past and the present*

—Jawaharlal Nehru

# Introduction

A sense of unity pervades the sweep of history of India which has always been considered as one geographical unit, notwithstanding the baffling diversity that prevails amongst its various regions. The *Vishnu Purana* defined its boundaries,

The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata there dwell the descendants of Bharata

In ancient times the country was called Bharata Varsha, after the prominent Bharata tribe that inhabited the northern region of the country. Later hordes of people such as Sakas, Huns, Kushans came from across the frontiers in search of better life and, finding the land hospitable, they made Bharata Varsha their home. A thousand years later, others followed. Finding cultural differences between themselves and the earlier inhabitants, the new comers rechristened the country as Hindustan—the land of the Hindus. Once settled down, they too took pride in their country. Amir Khusrau, for instance, was proud of being a Hindustani and gave ten reasons why Hindustan was the best country in the world.

The last to come to this land were the Europeans who professed trade as their mission. They named the country 'India' as their predecessors, the Greeks, had done. Except the Europeans, no foreigners ever returned to their 'home' nor they considered themselves aliens to the land. Though the British have quit, the country has retained the name and continues being called 'India'.

Geography has played a very important role in shaping the Indian mind and life. To quote the authors of the *Advanced History of India* "The intersection of the land by deep rivers and winding chains flanked by sandy deserts and impenetrable forests, fostered a spirit of isolation and cleft the country asunder into small political and even social units, whose diver-

prosper's

The need of precision and clarity of expression was voiced by Panini who worked out a remarkable system of grammar. To facilitate memorizing and remembrance on the other hand led to the evolution of the system of Sutras i.e. aphorisms, and most of the Indian thoughts was expressed in Sutras.

Other pursuits like drama, dance, poetry, music, architecture enlivened people's life. Bhoja, Kumbha, Tansen, Shahjahan and Thyagaraja are great names in the world of fine arts. Mathematicians like Bhaskaracharya, medicalmen like Charaka and Susruta and astronomers such as Aryabhata and Varahamihira added to the knowledge and progress of humanity.

The conflicts for political supremacy provided scope for the genius in warfare and government. Rudradaman, Akbar, Pratap, Shivaji and Tipu Sultan led mixed groups of people following different religions and faiths and secularism, rather than theocracy, appealed to the common man's heart. Instances are not unknown of friendship and communion between followers of different creeds, saints and poets brought them yet nearer to each other. Bhakti and Sufism have made significant contributions to India's unity and humaneness. In recent times Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo and Gandhi resurrected that message and Nehru gave India a modern outlook.

There is no field in which Indians have not made substantial contribution. This book presents brief biographies of selected 100 Indians who contributed to the making of India's national community and shaped her history.

The selection of 100 was a difficult task. In making a selection our sole criterion was whether the achievements of a personality would be recalled with pride by people after a few centuries? The authors assessed the personalities objectively as far as possible and they hope their selection will stand this test of time. Readers especially Indian will find it surprising and pleasant that the 100 great men came from different parts of India—from Kashmir in the north to Kerala in the south and from Assam in the east to Gujarat in the west.

Friends advised inclusion of a few names—e.g. Janaka, Mandhata, Harishchandra, Prithu, Bhishma, Vishwamitra,

Vasishtha, Gargi, Arundhati, Tukaram, Udayan, Sayan, Bajirao Peshwa, Sir Saiyed Ahmed, C V Raman, Raman Maharshi, Subhash Chandra Bose and Dr Radhakrishnan, but these could not be included as the book would have crossed its limit of 100. There can, however, be no doubt that they are really great men.

Another point that had to be continuously kept in mind by us was the size of the book. Were we to give even 4 to 5 pages to each great person, the book would have become bulky, it was therefore a constant reminder that the narration should be brief and compact. The book therefore records only important events in the lives as also the ideas of the great personalities but without losing the essentials. Yet, readers will find here and there some odd facts about a great man which may not be complimentary but then it needs no say that even *a great personality may suffer from some weakness*.

We hope the 'Glossary' will make reading comparatively easier. Those interested in knowing more about a great man can refer to the small 'Reading' at the end of the piece. In some cases no reading has been suggested for no single volume could be found on them.

We are indebted to the authors of innumerable books, original and translated, which provided source material, and to the librarians of the National Museum, Archaeological Survey of India, National Archives, British Council etc who often made available to us books at short notice.

We are grateful to Sri C Sivaramamurti, Director, National Museum and Sri Thomas P Matthai for their suggestions, to Sri Rajendra Lal, Sri R L Handa and Sri Neil Gokhale for the encouragement they gave us, and to Sri Amarish Kumar and Sri Snehi for their assistance in production.

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## Siva

The benign, the auspicious, that is the literal meaning of 'Siva'. To him are attributed many names and adjectives ascribed. The legends about Siva are legion and the composite personality that emerges from these is an entity which controls the triple forces of creation, preservation and destruction. The mythical figure none the less overshadows the actual person, so much so that doubts have been expressed if there ever was a person who later became symbolised by the name of Siva.

The history of India is replete with the names of great men to whom, on account of their service to humanity, divinity was ascribed. One such is Siva's. A benefactor of mankind, he was marked out in time for his qualities and placed on the high pedestal of Deity. With the passage of time more and more powers were attributed to Siva and with every favourable turn for his devotees, Siva's figure and form became more and more varied.

Nothing definite can be said of Siva's period. This much is, however, certain that Siva was the first great person who by his actions and qualities won country-wide acceptance. Historically, the earliest reference about Siva can be traced to the seals of the Indus Valley Civilisation which show Siva as a three faced being and wearing a horn on his head, bangles in the hands and a pectoral on the neck. He sits cross legged on a throne surrounded by an elephant, a tiger, a buffalo and a rhinoceros with a deer under the throne.

Yet another seal depicts Siva as a horned archer dressed in a costume of leaves. This form of Siva's bears a close resemblance to the deities of the ancient Mediterranean countries. For instance, there is a notable resemblance between Siva and his consort Uma and the Mediterranean Mitanni father-god Tesup and mother goddess Hepa and their vehicles, bull and lion. Because of this similarity doubts have been cast

whether Siva was a native of India or he was an immigrant to this country. Yet some are of the view that the cult of Siva was brought to India by the Dravidians and to prove their point they argue that even now 'Sembu' stands for Siva in Tamil. According to some other scholars the symbol of *linga* in *joni* was derived from the Austro-Menhirs. Despite these diverse views, most scholars consider Siva as of native origin and they assert that an immigrant could not have gained country-wide acceptance and popularity.

In time Siva remained no longer a person and developed into the concept of a mighty force with peculiar traits and symbols—even as a manifestation of God. In the *Rig-Veda* he occupies a subordinate position, only three hymns are dedicated to him. Later he becomes Siva the benign. But Siva had been associated with the natives and the fear expressed in the *Rig-Veda* that "let those whose deity is phallus not penetrate our sanctuary" was replaced by the recognition of *linga* in the *asvamedha* in *Yajur-Veda*. In the later *Vedas*, Siva assumes another aspect—of Mahesvara—the Great God. With the needs of the times his popularity waned or increased and even the concept underwent many changes. From the concept of 'parents of the world' of Kalidasa to the stone deity of Dayananda has been a long evolution.

With Siva are associated several legends of Sati's sacrifice in fire in protest against her father's slight to her husband, Parvati's penance and marriage to Siva, creation of the *Tandava* style of dancing, of Siva's drinking the poison that had come out from the churning of the ocean etc. When the gods tried to felicitate Siva on taking poison for others' sake, Siva's reply was "I have done nothing. Drinking of this poison is a small matter, there is so much poison in the affairs of the world. Those who can drink that poison and maintain their poise and balance are the real heroes."

The world has not witnessed many great heroes of Siva's stature. The very name 'Siva' evokes reverence. He is prayed to for the people's welfare. "May the Lord do you good."

#### Reading

Sir Mortimer Wheeler *The Indus Civilisation*

Also see 'Notes'

## Sudas

The Battle of Ten Kings is one of the earliest events recorded in Indian history. It shaped, like the subsequent *Mahabharata*, the course of history for centuries to come and its affect on social integration was remarkable.

The great battle was fought by Sudas, who came of the Bharata tribe, against forces of evil and in times to come the country came to be known as Bharatavarsha after these Bharatas. The *Vishnu-Purana* described "the country that lies to the north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains, there dwell the descendants of Bharata".

The attitude of the Aryans towards the natives created friction among themselves. Those who settled in the Punjab opposed mixing with the natives, but those who moved towards the east showed liberal attitudes. Soon this led to a conflict for political supremacy between the chiefs of the Punjab and the Bharatas. The Bharatas were a progressive and liberal people and also popular with the natives.

Sudas, grandson of the famous Bharata Divodas, led the forces supported by King Bheda and other indigenous people against the confederation of his ten enemy tribes, including five Aryan tribes—the Purus, the Turvasas, the Yadus, the Anus and the Druhyus—and five non Aryan tribes—the Pakhtas, the Bhalanas, the Alinas, the Vishnins and the Sivas. Initially the Bharatas had a set back, they were 'like cows without herdsmen'. But then Vasishtha went to the forefront. Sudas perhaps crossed the Purushni river to safety while the Turvasas were drowned as they tried to follow him. In the fight 6000 Druhyus and 600 Anus lay dead on the battle field. The *Rig-Veda* makes Indra and Tritsus help Sudas win the war.

This resulted in the assimilation of the Aryans and non-Aryans in the Gangetic plains. The event was commemorated by chief priests Vasishtha and Visvamitra. Some trace this

to 5000 B C and others to 3012 B C and 2449 B C

Sudas had stood for and brought about the cultural integration of the natives with the conquering Aryans

- I उत्तरम्यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।  
वयम् तद्भारतम् नाम भारती यत्र सन्तति ॥

(Vishnu Purana II 31)

[The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata, there dwell the descendants of Bharata]

Reading

C P Vaidya *History of Sanskrit Literature Vol I*

## Agastya

“From the Himalayas to the Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin)”, this demarcation of India’s boundaries is ascribed to Agastya, a saint-missionary and author of several hymns in the *Rig-Veda*. Sudas had pioneered national integration in the east. Agastya led the Aryan movement towards the south. Surmounting the difficulties posed by thick forests, aboriginals inhabiting the region and the civilised Dravidians retreating from the north on encroachment of their land by an alien culture, Agastya brought together the Aryavarta and the Dakshinapatha—the North and the South. He secured the right of way for his successors to the South.

Geographically the Vindhya divide the country and separate the North from the South and the separation should ordinarily have led to different evolutions. If the Vindhya ranges do not now separate the North from the South and the unity and culture of India is indivisible or the Hindu view of India is unalterably defined as ‘*Himavat Setu Paryantam*’—‘from the Himalayas to Rameswaram’,—then the credit for all this should go to Agastya. Expressing surprise over this, an Indian historian, K M Panikkar compared the influence of the Vindhya with the much lesser ranges of the Cheviots which led to separate development of Scotland from England. The Vindhya ranges are more formidable than the Cheviots.

There is an interesting Puranic story about Agastya that he drank up the water of the ocean. It so happened that the people of the sea coast of South India complained of attacks by *rakshasas* (the inhabitants of lands under the sea) and of their laying waste coastal villages. Agastya prepared the people to carry war against these mighty pirates and ‘drank up the waters’. Perhaps this is an allegory. It is just possible that Agastya might have forded some turbulent waters which with the passage of time exaggerated to the size of an ocean.

This Puranic version about Agastya taken with the worship of the sage in various colonies indicates that the earliest Indian voyages to the islands were taken to chase the pirates who had become a nuisance and source of danger to the coastal people

To infuse confidence amongst the people, Agastya brought his wife, disciples and a band of peasants to form the nucleus of the Aryan colony, and to keep the *rakshasas* under control he made Potiyil Hill on the Madurai Tirunelveli border his headquarters. This father figure of Agastya was held in esteem and he was made the regent of the star Canopus, later named after him.

Another legend associates Agastya with Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, who called on the sage in his hermitage on Mount Kunjara while he was on way to down south in search of Sita. The sage blessed Rama and gave him Vishnu's bow. When after his conquest Rama was returning, Agastya accompanied the prince to Ayodhya.

Agastya holds a venerable place in the formation of Tamil language and literature and is thought of as the first teacher of literature and science in the South. He is the patron saint of the South.

Agastya and Vasishtha, according to *Rig-Veda* are the offsprings of Mitra and Varuna and that accounts for Agastya's being called 'Maitra-Varuna'. He is also called Anurvashiyā. Sayana adds that Agastya was born 'a fish of great lustre', small in size, and that is why he was called 'kalasi Suta' and 'Maan'. The Puranas represent him as the son of Pulastya from whom the *rakshasas* sprang up. Agastya married the famous Lopamudra a daughter of the king of Vidarbha, and showed his superhuman power by turning Nahusha into the form of a serpent. Later the sage took pity and restored Nahusha to his original form. About Agastya's time Caldwell writes 'We shall not however greatly err on placing an era of Agastya in the seventh or at least in the sixth century B.C.'"

## Yajnavalkya

Yajnavalkya was the most learned scholar-philosopher of his times. In a contest organized by King Janaka on the occasion of an *asvamedha* (horse-sacrifice), he was rewarded with 1000 cows, with gold hanging to their horns. Those who lost were thinkers of eminence and included his former teacher Uddalaka Aruni, and Asvala, Artabhaga, Bhujyu, Usasta, Kahoda, Vidagdha Sakalya and Gargi. A graphic description of the event is recorded in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

In answer to Aruni's questions, Yajnavalkya described the Absolute or the Atman as the all-pervading and eternal to which nothing could be exterior. He satisfied others also in respect of their philosophical as well as practical questions e.g. ritualism, and they held peace. After the conclusion of his discourse, Yajnavalkya asked the august audience, "Whosoever among you desires to do so, may now question me. Or question me all of you. Or whosoever among you desire, I shall question him or I shall question all of you." This met with silence. Yajnavalkya's fame as the greatest philosopher was established.

Yajnavalkya describes the Atman, the Absolute, as all-pervading and eternal—

—"that which is without and above hunger, and thirst, sorrow and passion, decay and death, and the Brahman, "As the *Akshara*, indestructible, who is devoid of attributes pertaining to ordinary matter such as gross or subtle, great or small, who is not red like fire and fluid like water, neither shadow nor dark, not wind and nor ether, not adhesive, existing by itself, without taste, smell, eyes, ears, speech, understanding, without light or breath, without a mouth leading to something else, without size and neither a measure nor measurable, without inside or outside and neither consuming nor consumable. This Akshara Brahman keeps



in order and functioning the sun and moon, earth and heaven, moments and hours, days and nights, half-months, months, seasons and years. He keeps rivers in their courses towards different directions, and it is he who secures to the doer the fruits of his deed, and connects causes and effects, though apart in time. That Brahman is unseen, but all-seeing, unheard but all-hearing, unperceived but all-perceiving, unknown but all-knowing, and the Primary Principle that enables vision, audition, perception and cognition."

On another occasion, talking of *karma* and *mukti*, the sage says, "The soul after death goes nowhere where it has not been from the very beginning, nor does it become other than that which it has always been, the one eternal omnipresent."

The *Satpatha Brahmana* recognised Yajnavalkya as an authority on rituals. Obviously he could not have been present at Yudhishtira's Rajasuya Yajna as has been mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.

Once Yajnavalkya was asked

"How many gods are there really, O sage?"

"One", he replied.

\* Now answer to a further question. Agni, Vayu, Aditya, Kalā Prana, Anna, Brahma, Rudra, Vishnu, some meditate on one of these and some on another. Say which of these is the best for us?

Yajnavalkya replied, "These are but the chief manifestations of the highest, the immortal, the incorporeal Brahman. Brahman indeed is all this, and a man may meditate on or worship or discard also those which are its manifestations."

Yet on another occasion the sage said "The Atman is the subject knowing within us. The Atman as the knowing subject can never become an object for us, and is, therefore, itself unknowable. Atman is veiled by empirical reality. The Atman is the sole reality."

The above ideas sound as if they are from the *Bhagvadgita*.

But it is not so. The fact is that Yajnavalkya's teachings supply the basis upon which Hindu philosophy evolved and developed.

Yajnavalkya hailed most probably from the eastern part of the country and lived before Katyayana, the famous grammarian. He received education from Uddalaka Aruni, a

## Manu

Manu is the first Indian who consolidated the prevalent religious and social ideas and gave a codified law to the people. In his *Manavaśāstra*, also known as *Manavadharmasāstra* and *Manusmṛiti*, the latter name being more popular, Manu formulated his views in the form of *Grihasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras*. The *Smṛiti* essentially an ethical code based on ancient usages, customs and conventions, guided the people's socio-cultural life and thus their destiny for centuries. In such deep reverence was Manu held that nothing opposed to his *Smṛiti* could ever gain wide social acceptance or approval—a citation from Manu left no ground for questioning the provision or his authority.

Manu was an advocate of the established order. The world for him is a creation by the divine power and everything in it perfectly ordered. A king being a divine authority possesses absolute authority and dispenses absolute justice. Castes, Manu says, have been ordained by God and he has assigned specific duties to each caste. Brahmins come first, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras (including Yavanas and Sakas). The *tapas* of the Brahmins is studies, of the Kshatriyas the protection of the weak, of the Vaisyas trade and agriculture and of the Sudras service to others. Should one fail to perform his specified duties, he has to face its consequences—social and religious—which may be mild or rigorous depending upon the gravity of his omission or in case of exceeding the course his commission too. A Brahmin, for instance, has to perform his duties such as to study the *Vedas*, beget family and offer sacrifice before seeking *moksha*. But should he think of reversing the course, he will only sink down. The members of other castes can, however, absolve themselves of sin by carrying out penance ordered by the Brahmins. Obviously, Manu gave Brahmins too much of an upper hand in the social set up which

led to some social and political evils and for these Manu has been severely criticised

In Manu's social hierarchy the right and wrong could be determined on the basis of the *Vedas*, the *Smritis*, *achara* (practice) and the voice of God (conscience). The first three made for social order and proved a great preserving force for customs which were then being undermined. Manu glorified these in the people's eye. But in the longer run society failed to progress, Manu's ideas proved detrimental to the interests and welfare of the majority of the people. His prescriptions for Sudras and women are today grotesque. He advised against liberalism for woman and opposed a Brahmin marrying a Sudra woman or one having Niyoga marriage a practice then in vogue but not favoured, but for which he offered the indulgents the prospects of hell.

Manu, it appears, suffered from conflicts in his own mind, otherwise he could have stuck to certain stands. His attitude on some social aspects is just lukewarm and he shirks from giving a lead to the society. Whereas he is against the eating of flesh he compromises by permitting it on certain occasions e.g. Madhuparva, Yajna, Sraddha and in connection with rites to honour God. An inexplicable view of Manu!

There is, however, a single thread running through his system, his consideration of 'conscience' as a determinant for social norms. He said, 'one may abandon what was once *dharma* if it ends in unhappiness or it has become hateful to the people'. But people rarely follow unless those in authority explicitly give a lead. Anyway, Manu's code today is anachronistic. Perhaps his code was, like the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*, intended for those who could not reach the fountain head. Yet no single book in India has perhaps influenced the course of society as much the *Manu smriti* has done. The *Manusmriti* is a voluminous work containing 2694 Slokas (The other *Smritis* are smaller. The *Yajnavalkyasmriti* has 1009 verses and *Naradasmriti* 895 only).

Manu literally means the *man*. The author of *Manusmriti* is one of the fourteen mythological progenitors of mankind and rulers of the earth. Brahma, the creator, the myth goes, created Manu and Satarupa, Manu took Sitarupa to wife. This was the seventh Manu and the authorship of *Manu smriti*

is ascribed to him. Edward Hopkins thinks that Manu was a Punjabi Brahmin and that the book should have been compiled around 500 A.D. under the patronage of Pulkeshin at Kalyanapur. P. V. Kane's view is that some one authored it, who it was is not known, and foisted it on to Manu so as to make the work acceptable. Others ascribe it to the second century B.C. Some associate this Manu with the one who survived the deluge and renewed sacrificial ordinances.

Medhatithi, Govindaraja, Kulluka Bhatt, Madhava, Sryana, Narayana, Raghavananda, Nandacharya, Sir Williams Jones, and others, have written commentaries on the *Manu-smriti*.

Here are a few sayings of Manu.

A maternal aunt, a mother-in-law and a paternal aunt must be honoured, like the wife of one's teacher, they are equal to the wife of one's teacher.

Wealth, kindred, age, the due performance of rites, and, fifthly, sacred learning are titles to respect, but each succeeding cause is more weighty than the preceding one.

Women must be honoured and adored by their fathers, brothers, husbands and brothers-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honoured there the gods are pleased but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes, but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers.

#### Reading

P. V. Kane *History of Dharmasastra*

G. Buhler *The Law of Manu*

## Systems Of Philosophy

When the Aryans had settled down in the north, their interests shifted from rituals to speculative thinking and their Vedic authoritarianism crystallised into systems of philosophy which aimed at attaining *moksha*, i.e. the beatitude of final release. Six of these systems developed into prominence. These are

Purva Mimansa of Jaimini,  
Uttar Mimansa of Vyasa Badarayana  
Nyaya of Gautama  
Vaisheshik of Kanada  
Samkhya of Kapila, and  
Yoga of Patanjali

The Purva Mimansa presumed the concepts of Vedic ritualism, the Uttar Mimansa, also known as Vedanta, on the other hand cherished Upanishadic teachings. Later Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya made detailed commentaries on Sthanatraya i.e. *Brahma Sutra* (of Badarayana), *Bhagavadgita* and *Upanishads*. Both the Mimansas accepted testimony (*śabda*) as proof (*pramāṇa*).

The other four systems viz. Nyaya, Vaisheshik, Samkhya and Yoga accept *śabda* as confirmatory only and not original in character.

The exponents of all these systems expressed their views more as belonging to a system than as individuals, which is why they maintained silence about themselves. Nothing much about these great philosophers is therefore known.

development through both *sañña* and *tañña*

Creation is the unfolding of the different effects of the original *prakṛiti* and destruction is their dissolution in *prakṛiti*. At the time of creation individual souls assume various physical forms according to their past *karma*. As a matter of fact the entire cosmos exists in *prakṛiti* in a subtle form and becomes manifest in creation but not *de novo*. It is certain that things cannot come out of nothing. For instance, oil exists in sesamum seeds and therefore one gets oil from the seeds, it can not be squeezed out of a handful of sand.

But *prakṛiti* and its products are unconscious and can not discriminate between themselves and *puruṣa*, the self which is pure spirit. The individual is not body, life or mind, but the informing self, peaceful and eternal. By the light of *puruṣa*'s, consciousness we become conscious of *prakṛiti*. *Buddhi*, *manas* etc are mere instruments of consciousness and are not themselves conscious. There are many conscious beings in the world and hence the plurality of selves in bondage as well as in release.

The *jīva* or empirical individual is a member of the natural world, it is the self limited by the body and the senses. It is the composite of free spirit and *prakṛiti*, where the *puruṣa* forgets its true nature and is deluded into the belief that it thinks, feels and acts. *Buddhi*, by means of reflection of *puruṣa*, becomes of its form and experiences objects.

Salvation is only phenomenal, for the true self is always free. Bondage is the activity of *prakṛiti* toward one not possessing the knowledge of discrimination between *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*. Release is the inactivity of the *prakṛiti* towards one possessing discriminative knowledge. Freedom consists in the removal of the obstacle which hinders the full manifestation of the light of *puruṣa*. It also results from the practice of virtue and *Yoga*.

Saṃkhya prescribes two kinds of duties for man one, worldly, and two, duties that turn man away from worldly activity and bestow final freedom of the soul. Kapila was opposed to rituals. Nevertheless rituals and sacrifices help in attaining desired objects, righteousness raises man high and by unrighteousness he sinks down. From ignorance he incurs the bondage of *saṃsāra* and from knowledge the soul gets final release. The plurality of the souls is true because if the souls

of all beings were one and the same then the entire world would die or be born at the same time or all would see the same thing at the same time when one saw it.

Born of Kardama and Devahuti, Kapila was yoked to work early in life when in search of the higher things of life, his father Kardama left the family at Bindusara. Kapila not only looked after his mother and nine sisters but also instructed them about the rudiments of philosophy. Later when he moved northward, Kapila learnt more about Yoga and imparted its knowledge to people, prominent amongst whom was King Prithu, whose *yajna* he later attended.

It is said that Kapila composed *Samkhyapravachan Sutra* and *Tattvasammas*. There is a legend that Kapila burnt down 50,000 sons of Sagara when they imputed to the sage the theft of the consecrated horse and attacked him. But when Anshuman implored, the sage gave back the horse and said that the Sagaras would get redemption by the waters of the Ganga.

The theory of evolution is bound to be interlinked with legends and myths, but shorn of these Kapila's system is precise and unambiguous.

#### Reading

S Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy Vol II*

## Gautama

Heard of a man with eyes on his feet ? But then it is said about Gautama, the famous exponent of Nyaya, that is logic, that he had his eyes on his feet. How illogical for a logician ! Legend has it that when Gautama was absorbed in meditation he fell in a well and that God in his mercy bestowed on Gautama's feet the power of vision, to prevent further mishaps.

The systematic exposition of logic owes much to Gautama. He propounded his system of Nyaya in the *Nyaya Sutra*. According to him the goal of individual life is the attainment of salvation which is possible from the knowledge of *padarthas* i.e. substances, 16 in all. Gautama goes deep to investigate their nature. Nyaya studied the tools of thinking through which one can reach the truth as also the obstacles that lay in the path of clear thinking which he distinguished from correct thinking.

The Nyaya accepts four methods of establishing the identity of a fact, phenomenon or object, namely perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anuman*), comparison (*upaman*), and testimony (*aparakya*). Besides, it also accepts the intuition of seers as a method. The Nyaya dialectic takes into account three processes: discussion (*ad*), controversy (*jalpa*), and cavil (*vitanda*). The intellect should help in giving right answers to honest questions. Convinced of the goal of deliverance and of the means of attaining it, one should prepare to sail oneself to the unknown. On reaching the other shore, the enquirer experiences non-sensuous eternal bliss i.e. cessation of consciousness or release from pain but without the presence of any positive pleasure, for there can be no pleasure without pain.

The Nyaya proves the existence of God thus:  
From effects we infer causes.



Anything that produces an effect must exist

The objects we see must have an Omniscient Being as the cause of their creation

A characteristic of the produced effect is that it is made up of component parts and anything that is made up of component parts must have an agency for its formation

Gautama lived before the time of his name sake Gotama, the Buddha. He was the son of Rahukana and was born on the banks of the river Kshirodadhī. Vyasa is said to have been Gautama's pupil.

Gautama has also been identified with the author of *Dharma Sutra* and as the husband of Ahalya. The episode finds place in the *Valmiki Ramayana*. According to the legend Indra, a disciple of Gautama, was attracted towards his teacher's beautiful wife Ahalya. One early morning awakened by the cock's sound heralding dawn, Gautama went out for his morning duties. Indra who had made the sound entered the house, posed as Gautama and slept with his teacher's wife. On return, the sage found the two together. Enraged at his disciple's misbehaviour and not knowing the deceit upon his wife, he cursed both, Indra and Ahalya. Ahalya turned into stone and the story goes that when Rama was in exile and saw the statue of Ahalya he brought her to life.

Reading

S Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy Vol II*

## Kanada

Kanada is the exponent of the Vaiseshik system of philosophy. He used to meditate on 'atom', he was found so engrossed in his theory of atoms that people thought the sage lived on atoms. Then after meditating throughout the day, Kanada would roam about during the night for food. It is difficult to say whether this was a compliment or a light-hearted remark or that for this peculiarity he took up the name 'Kanada' which etymologically means 'atom eater'. May be, for his wanderings at unearthly hours he was nick-named 'Aulukya', the son of owl, an extraordinarily wise bird in the habit of moving during the night. Or perhaps he took his name from his sage-father Uluka.

The system that Kanada propounded takes its name from 'Vishesha' (particularity) as it emphasises the significance of particulars or individuals. A pluralistic thought, 'Vaiseshik' is mainly a system of physics and metaphysics. According to it the entire cosmos, individual souls and God, are composed of six categories, namely substance, generality, quality, particularity, action and inherence, to which the later Vaiseshikas added a seventh, non existence. Three of these, namely substance, quality and activity possess real objective existence and the remaining three viz generality, particularity and inherence are logically inferred and not directly perceived.

Each of the six qualities has its own further sub-divisions. Substance, for instance, is of nine kinds—earth, time, air, light, mind, space, ether, water, and soul. These comprise all corporeal and non corporeal things and each of these is endowed with its own qualities. For instance, the quality of earth is smell, of water taste, of time now and then, and of soul self-consciousness or the 'I' idea. Similarly, the quality of air is touch, and of space here and there. Qualities, being inherent in the substances, are not perceived apart from them. Thus the

category of inherence indicates intimate and internal relationship of substances and qualities

The *atman* is located within material substances and is of two kinds—individual soul (e.g. gods, men, and lower animal souls), and supreme soul to which only God belongs. The existence of soul is inferred from the fact that consciousness cannot be a property of the body or the sense organs or the mind. Though it is all-pervading, it resides in a body. Thus there are as many bodies as souls. The plurality of souls is inferred from their differences in status and the variety of conditions. Each soul experiences the consequences of its own deeds, and has its own characteristic individuality. Even the freed souls exist with specific features.

Vaiseshik, the system that Kanada propounded, had quite a few things common with Nyaya—the most important being logic and views about God. The difference between the two, however, lies in that whereas Nyaya developed epistemological side of the compound philosophy, Vaiseshik developed its cosmological side. According to Vaiseshik, the cosmos is composed of *pramanus*, the eternal, smallest, indivisible atoms. These atoms are earth, water, light and air.

The individual who faithfully performs the duties enjoined on him by the scriptures is freed from the bondage of *samsara*. Understanding of the universe also helps him in attaining *moksha*. But he who shirks duties continues to be tethered to human bondage.

When a person grows weary and is disgusted with life he longs for final liberation. He approaches nearer and nearer to that goal in proportion with the intensity with which he longs for it and the efforts he puts forth in that direction. On his achieving the state of *moksha*, the instruments and the earthly habiliments of the soul cease to function.

Kanada lived at Prabhasa and was a student of Soma Sarma. He was also known as Kasyapa.

#### Reading

S. Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy Vol II*

## Valmiki

Many anecdotes are associated with the life of Valmiki, the great poet, the author of the *Ramayana*, the first and foremost Sanskrit epic

In his early life, Valmiki is said to have been a bandit. An attempt on his part once to rob a sadhu of his meagre belonging proved a turning point in his life. The sadhu brought to the bandit the home-truth that every one would be ever ready to share the plunder but none the consequences of the misdeed. Struck by this, the bandit prayed his informant to suggest an easy way out of this world of sin and help him to lead a happy life. 'Give up banditry' was one part of the advice, supplemented by another, the prescribed recitation of *Mara Mara* (the reverse of the chant 'Rama Rama'). The truth must have gone home, for the bandit not only gave up the profession but also practised penance for his past misdeeds. He turned pensive. The involvement seems to have been perfect in that his body was enveloped by an ant-hill out of which it had to be dug up. The Sanskrit equivalent of ant-hill is Valmika and the one coming out of it is Valmiki—which accounts for the name. His original name was Ratnakar.

Valmiki was sensitive to the core. One day he heard the wailing of a bird whose mate had been killed by a hunter. Hearing this, Valmiki unknowingly uttered\*

May you Hunter ' never attain your honour,  
because of a loving couple you have killed one

Restless after this, he composed the *Ramayana*. This gave him peace and his name spread far and wide. Valmiki set up his hermitage on the bank of the river Tamas, a tributary of the Ganga, where many sages turned to him for knowledge.

Valmiki is said to have been a contemporary of Rama

When in deference to people's comments, Rama arranged to abandon Sita in the forest, she found her way to the hermitage of Valmiki. In course of time, she gave birth to the twins, Lava and Kusa who later fought a heroic battle with Lakshmana and his army. When the father and sons confronted, Valmiki intervened. To prove her purity, Sita begged for place and the mother earth took her in. The sons, on the sage's efforts, returned to the father.

Valmiki had an everlasting influence on generations of poets, several of whom retold Rama's story their own way.

Nothing certain about Valmiki's life or his period is known. There is, however, no doubt about Valmiki's greatness or about his influence on later Indian literature.

\* मा निपाद प्रतिष्ठा त्व गम शाश्वती समा  
यत्क्रौञ्च विधुनादेवम्बुध्री वाममोहिनीम् ।

Reading

M. Winternitz *A History of Indian Literature*

## Rama

**D**evotion to truth, faithfulness to one's wife and welfare of mankind 'in thought, speech and deed' as the goal of life—these qualities have not always been valued by kings of various periods. Not so Raja Rama who adhered to these resolutely and uniformly and for which he was esteemed by the people, who praised and elevated him on the pedestal of divinity. Rama is considered as the most virtuous king to have ever reigned on earth and the intervening centuries have failed in erasing or reducing his appeal. Drawing upon the story of Rama, poets and dramatists have envisioned him as an incarnation of Vishnu, and his consort Sita as an incarnation of Lakshmi.

Fascinating as Rama's life and character are, they also abound in elements of drama—rise and fall, sorrow and happiness, anger and disgust—all those that go to make a story human and interesting. The accounts of failures and successes apart, the narrative leads to victory of virtue over vice. So much imagination appears to have coloured the events that it is rather difficult to demarcate where fiction ends and reality starts. Never the less certain facts stand out which prove the reality. And one such is that once upon a time—precisely at what time it is difficult to say—a king named Dasarath ruled over Kosala with capital at Ayodhya. He begot from his three queens, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra four sons named Rama, Bharata, and Lakshmana and Satrugna.

The four princes grew up together. While they were striplings, the sage Visvamitra approached the king to send Rama for protection from the *rakshasas*. Though unwillingly, Dasaratha complied with the request and sent Rama and Lakshmana who killed Taraka, a female demon who was disturbing the sages in their penance. Visvamitra then took Rama and Lakshmana to the court of king Janaka of Mithila,

in eastern India, where princess Sita's *Swayamara* was in progress. It was enjoined that only he who could bend Siva's bow in the court would win the princess's hand. Rama succeeded and was married to Sita.

The aging Dasaratha decided to enthrone Rama, But Kaikeyi, the favourite queen, asked the king to fulfil two promises that Bharata be installed on the throne and Rama be exiled for fourteen years. Bound as Dasarath was by his word, he condescended to the queen.

Rama accompanied by Lakshmana and Sita departed from Ayodhya and travelling southwards, took up abode at Chitrakut. Dasaratha's end was hastened by this separation. Bharata was doubly aggrieved and with the courtiers, he set out to bring Rama back. But Rama refused to return before the expiry of 14 years. Finally it was arranged that Bharata should act as Rama's regent.

Years rolled on and Rama moved from one hermitage to another. Then at Agastya's suggestion, he took abode on the banks of the Godavari at Panchavati near Nasik. There Surpanakha, a sister of Ravana, saw Rama and fell in love with him. But Rama repelled her advances. Humiliated, she brought her brothers, Khar and Dushan, who along with their army were completely destroyed by Rama and Lakshmana. Smarting under her injury, she repaired to Lanka, to her brother, Ravana, who accompanied by Maricha proceeded to punish Rama. Lured by Maricha who appeared in the disguise of a gold deer, Rama went in its pursuit, leaving Sita behind under his brother's charge. Sita, however, chided Lakshmana for not going after Rama and finally Lakshmana left, drawing a line which Sita was not to cross. Ravana saw her alone and assuming the form of a religious mendicant lulled Sita's apprehension to cross the line and took her forcibly to Lanka. On return, Rama did not find Sita and his rage and despair knew no bounds. He and Lakshmana went in pursuit of Ravana. They made friends with Sugriva whom they assisted in recovering his capital *Kishkindha* from his usurping brother, Bali. Now free, Sugriva and his army engaged themselves in Rama's work.

Hanuman, the monkey-god, searched for Sita and succeeded in meeting her in Ravana's Ashoka Vatika in Lanka. He

gave news about Rama and consoled her that he would soon be invading Lanka, to free her

By super-human efforts the armies of Sugriva were transported to Lanka where Vibhishana, humiliated by his brother Ravana, joined Rama. After many fierce battles, Ravana was killed with many of his sons and relatives, Sita was rescued, and Vibhishana was made the king of Lanka.

Rama then returned to Ayodhya on the Diwali day. Reunited with his brothers, Rama was crowned and he began a glorious reign. Rama's victory is celebrated on Dussehra and his return to Ayodhya on Diwali.

~~But Rama's happiness was short-lived.~~ Disturbed by people's aspersions on Sita's character about her stay in Ravana's Lanka, Rama sent her away, even though she was in the family way. Heart-broken, Sita found refuge in the *ashram* of Valmiki where she delivered the twins, Lava and Kusa. When the boys were about 15, they fought a battle with their father, after which the family was united. Now to prove her purity, Sita called upon the earth to receive her if she was pure. The mother-earth opened and received her. Having lost his beloved, Rama was unable to endure life for long and entered the river Sarayu and 'into the glory of Vishnu.

Centuries have passed, Rama is revered and worshipped all over the country as the perfect man, as one who never failed in his duty. Rama's sense of justice for his subjects and Rama's and Sita's faithfulness have endeared the two so much to the people that their story in the form of Ramalila is enacted in every part of India. Ramalila is staged in several South East Asian countries also.

Reading

V. S. Srinivasa Sastry *Thirty Lectures on the Ramayana*



## Vyasa Badaryana

The white complexioned Aryans had arrogated to themselves racial superiority and the Brahmins thought of the dark natives as 'non intelligent and inferior' To such egotists and self-centred people, the dark complexioned Vyasa Badarayana gave quite a jolt, by his philosophical insight and deep learning he overwhelmed their orthodoxy

According to Vyasa, God is the omniscient and omnipotent cause of existence, continuance and dissolution of the universe He is both the sole existent universal soul and creation is an act of His will

Vyasa also thought that the self (*atman*) is untouched by qualities and does not serve as an agent to anything It is different from intellect, sense, body and soul

He says the body is merely made of food (it is *annamaya*), the *pran* (the principal vital air) is aerial and non intelligent, the senses, like a lamp are mere instruments of knowledge, the *manas* is unsteady and swallowed by *avidya* The *manas* does not exist during dreamless sleep which culminates in happiness When the *atman* abides in the *manas*, it is in a state of dreamless sleep (called *prajna*), and is indicated by *anand* (bliss)

The Self is indefinable and supreme That is why it is said of Him as *neti neti* (not this not this)—it is neither body nor *pran* nor senses nor *manas* It transcends speech and thought and cannot be realized by study logic or any other similar discipline It can be known only by intuitive experience It marks the path of religious discipline for those who have renounced worldly attachment

The Self in its essence consists solely of intelligence Under the limiting condition of abiding in the body it becomes both the doer and the enjoyer Affected by desires and tainted in its nature by ego and the like the *atman* led by *karma* wanders about from body to body and attains different worlds

e. g. the world of *pitris*. When it performs prohibited works it goes to hell. But by acquiring philosophical wisdom, it attains union with *Brahman*.

Vyasa propounded his philosophical doctrine known as Uttar Mimamsa in Vedanta Sutra. It deals with Vedanta or the final aim of the Vedas. It is also called the *Brahma Sutra* since it deals with the doctrine of Brahman, and the *Saririka Sutra* since it deals with the embodiment of the unconditioned self. In its 555 sutras, consisting of two or three words each, an attempt has been made to systematise the teachings of *Upanishads*.

Vyasa was a pupil of Gautama, the logician. He is said to have been born of wedlock of an Aryan and a native. Sankar, Ramanuja, Madhavacharya and many other scholars wrote commentaries on Vyasa's *Vedanta Sutra*. Vyasa Badarayana is different from Vyasa, the celebrated author of the *Mahabharata*.

Reading :

S Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy Vol II*

The *atman* or self, according to Jaimini, is all-pervading. It is distinct from the intellect, the senses and the body. It is real, constant and unchanging. It is in contact with *manas*, brings about cognition, and the results of action are determined by the efforts of the soul and its previous *karma*.

Jaimini was a pupil of Vyasa and like his guru considered the *atman* as non-corporeal. He established the validity of the rules of *Mimansa* which were then threatened by Buddhism. *Jaimini Sutra* describes the different sacrifices and their purpose and the theory of *apurva* as well as some philosophical propositions. *Apurva* means transcendental potency. Acts are enjoined with a view to their fruits, and between the act and its result there is a necessary connection. An act performed today may fetch results at some later date and in the meantime the results may be in the form of an unseen force or *apurva* which may be regarded either as the imperceptible antecedent of the fruit or the after state of the act itself. The deferred effect is possible only through the force of *apurva*. Jaimini's *Devatakanda* also proposes worship (*upasana*) enjoined by the *Vedas*.

Jaimini was concerned with the correct performance of rites as are laid down in the *Vedas*. For this he was attacked and called an atheist. According to him when the Vedic rites were correctly performed, God did not matter at all. Also the *Vedas* being independent of Divine Will, God was inconsequential.

Jaimini received *Sama Veda* from his teacher Vyasa but systematised it. It is said that he was invited for the Rajasuya sacrifice by Yudhishtira. He was considered an authority on Yoga, and Hiranyabha was his famous disciple. Sabar wrote a commentary on Jaimini's *Mimansa Sutra*.

#### Reading

S Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy*

S Radhakrishnan *Source Book of Indian Philosophy*

## Bharatamuni

**B**haratamuni is the author of the *Natyasastra* which is devoted to the theory of poetics and dramatics. It comprehensively covers different subjects connected with the stage.

Bharatamuni defines *Natya* as 'a mimicry of the exploits of gods, the *asuras*, kings as well as house holders in this world', and recounts its characteristic forms as gestures, postures, words, decoration (costumes and make up), and general dependence on dance, song and music.

Like the myths of divine origin of so many subjects, the drama too has its own myth which is. The gods led by Indra entreated Brahma for some kind of entertainment delightful to the eyes and pleasing to the ear. Their request was acceded to and the *Natya Veda*, a fifth Veda, was created with the observation

This art has been created by me as reflection of life and activity of the world, with all the different sentiments amidst changing situations and in their entirety as a centre where the activities of the people (the highest, the middle and the lowest) converge so as to have the same as a medium of education and as a force giving impetus to bravery and as a source of entertainment, pleasure etc. There is no learning, no craft, no science, no fine art, no religious exercise (yoga), no ascetic discipline, that is not witnessed in the *Natya Veda*.

The *Natyasastra* is divided into 36 chapters. It does not deal with drama merely as a form of literature but considers it from the point of view of theatrical performance as a whole. It describes the construction of the stage, its inauguration with observance of religious ceremonies and different types of physical movements in dance and mimicry. It tells how the actor should express the setting of various seasons and different feelings through dance, songs, gestures and postures.

Bharata is quite clear about empathy. He suggests use of different languages and dialects for different characters and stresses that the language should be intelligible to everyone. Even the actors and others should take care about the modulation of voice, dramatic poetry, development of action, dramatic style of composition, costumes, decorations, colours of the dress, ornaments, appearance of different characters on the stage, training, time, place and occasion for performance, music, songs, etc. He even suggests that they should so act that they anticipate understanding and appreciation of their roles. Bharatamuni says -

This (the Natya) teaches duty to those who have no sense of duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment, and it chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned. This gives dimension to kings, firmness to persons afflicted with sorrow, and wealth to those who are for earning it, and it brings composure to persons agitated in mind. The drama as I have devised is mimicry of action and conduct of people which is rich in various emotions and depicts different situations. This will relate to actions of man, good, bad and indifferent, and will give courage, amusement and happiness as well as counsel to them.

The drama and stage affect people of all ages and types. Young people are pleased to see love, the learned a reference to some doctrine, the seekers of money to the topic of wealth and the passionless the topics of liberation. Common women, children and cultured persons are delighted with the comic sentiment and costumes and make up.

A discussion of what forms the basis of enjoyment of drama led to the origin of the (theory of sentiments). The *Natyaśāstra* for the first time developed the basic principles of *rasas* in poetics and aesthetics. Just as different spices leave behind different tastes, sweet or sour or bitter, even so do the *bhavas* (emotions) on stage, they arouse sentiments in the mind of the audience. Bharata observed as many as 41 *bhavas* (psychological states), of these 8 have durable affect on the human personality on the basis of *rasas* (sentiments) and by

strengthening the effect of these 8 *bhavas* the dramatist is able to evoke sentiments. These *rasas* are *shringar* (love), *hasya* (humour), *karuna* (pity), *raudra* (terror), *virā* (heroism), *bhayanaka* (fear), *vibhatsa* (aversion) and *adbhuta* (astonishment).

In the distant past there was no professional class of playwrights in India, every troupe had its own playwright who accompanied it from place to place. In order to make their plays more interesting for larger audiences the playwrights often utilised local history and legends. Their work was quoted or referred to by authors on subjects like gestures, poetics, prosody, music and even commentators utilised the work. The *Natyasastra* had tremendous impact not only on theatre but also on literature and that explains why the author was raised to the status of a *muni* i.e. sage.

#### Reading

Bharatamuni *Natyasastra*

# Krishna

The vast mass of legends and fables that has gathered around Krishna, the most celebrated and popular hero of Indian mythology, invests his character with a degree of mysticism. Krishna's address to Arjuna contained in the *Bhagavadgita* has given strength to the weak and solace to the suffering. In living memory those who strove for India's independence were inspired by the celestial call 'Action is thy right, not its fruits'.

Krishna's character has an immediate appeal. The mischievous pranks of the child, the follies of the boy, the amours of the youth, and the wisdom of the adult—all these are a source of boundless wonder and delight. His catholic outlook and philosophy of the immortality of the soul and action (*karma*) make an impact on men and women, irrespective of the land or time to which they belong or the religion they profess. This has sustained the Indians in their darkest days. The *Harivamsa* and the *Bhagavat Purana* vividly describe the minutest details of Krishna's life.

Krishna came of the pastoral Yadava race which dwelt on the banks of the Yamuna river and in and around Mathura, a town in Uttar Pradesh, and ruled by a king named Kansa. It was prophesied that Kansa would be overthrown by one soon to be born to his cousin Devaki and her husband Vasudeva. To avert the incidence, Kansa indulged in bloodshed and violence, not sparing his kith and kin. Acting on the prophecy he imprisoned Devaki and Vasudeva. In prison, she gave birth to a male child and as if to herald the coming of the saviour, the gates of the prison opened automatically. Vasudeva, knowing that his relatives Nanda and Yasoda too were expecting, went to them with the child. Yasoda had delivered a female child. Nanda agreed to exchange the babies and Vasudeva returned to the prison with Yasoda's child. The next day Kansa took her away. The male child escaped.

The child Krishna was brought up at Gokul by Nanda. The boy grew up in the company of his cousin Balarama and other cowherds—*gopas* and *gopis* of whom Radha was the most prominent. While tending their cows, the children would indulge in all sorts of pranks on the river banks. Krishna would play on the flute and they would dance and make merry. If sometime a situation arose, Krishna faced it boldly. At home they would eat away butter and milk to the annoyance of others but everything would end well. Radha was attached to Krishna only to suffer all through her life. The love of Radha and Krishna has fascinated the Hindu mind and important sects such as Chaitanya's have grown around it.

As Krishna grew up he faced his adversaries and finally succeeded in slaying Kansa and his relatives Jarasandh, Sisupala and others. In course of time Krishna moved his capital to Dwaraka in Gujarat and married Rukmini whom he had carried off in a conquest. Whereas a few friends and relatives accompanied Krishna to Dwaraka, most of them continued to live in Brija-bhoomi as the region around Mathura is known. Once Uddhava, a friend of Krishna, brought a message to Radha but even its philosophic content could not console the love-torn Radha.

Krishna was related to Pandavas and Kauravas and when the war between the two broke out, Krishna acted as Arjuna's charioteer. Arjuna, one of the five Pandava brothers, was renowned for his bravery but seeing his kith and kin facing each other in the battle ground at Kurukshetra, he became diffident and pessimistic about fighting, saying what good would it do to take the lives of dear ones. In the battle field this appeared like cowardice and when Arjuna was in such a frame of mind, Krishna inspired him to action with his famous message of *karma*. Arjuna fought bravely. On the successful conclusion of war in favour of the Pandavas, Krishna returned to his capital Dwaraka. The war has been vividly described in the great epic *Mahabharata*. Krishna reigned judiciously for long thereafter.

But portents of fearful signs appeared, spreading among people an alarm. One day, mistaking Krishna for a deer, a relation struck an arrow that killed him instantly.

Krishna's *life* is simple yet so charming that over the cen-



turies Mathura and Brindavan have become places of pilgrimage. The story has been given a magical colouring. the *gopis* are interpreted to be souls that encircle around Krishna, the Lord, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and in this form he has been deified and worshipped. Krishna's message has a universal appeal and in the history of India it has been a great unifying force.

The *Mahabharata* is full of legends of wisdom, bravery and devotion of the great men that participated in the great battle at Kurukshetra. Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Duryodhana etc. were prominent figures on the side of Kauravas and Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Bhima, Abhimanyu, Krishna etc. on the side of the Pandavas. Kunti and Draupadi are two great lady characters who have prominent roles in the great epic.

#### Reading

*Bhagavat Purana*

*Harivamsha*

*Mahabharata*

## Yudhishtira

“**A**svatthama has died”, Yudhishtira, the Pandava prince, confirmed to Dronacharya, the commander of the Kaurava army. On hearing of his son's death, Drona lost all interest in life and was killed. Yudhishtira's statement was ‘Asvatthama has died, man or elephant’, but in the din Drona had missed the latter part. Actually it was an elephant of the name ‘Asvatthama’, not the man, that had been killed. Yudhishtira thus misled the enemy. But he was so righteous that he was known as ‘the son of righteousness’—Dharmaputra, and none doubted his veracity.

The wrong, call it stratagem, may be mitigated for it was made in the thick of war to demoralise the unscrupulous enemy conduct whose had been wrong. The eldest of the 100 Kauravas, Duryodhana had not only played deceit in the game of dice but had also misbehaved with the Pandava queen Draupadi and usurped their kingdom. Yet to the puritan, Yudhishtira's above conduct has been inexplicably wrong for they say what if the opponent played foul, one must not abandon the path of righteousness !

Yudhishtira was the eldest of the five sons of Pandu, king of Hastinapur, and Kunti. Bhima and Arjuna were two other princes born to them. From another queen Madri, Pandu begot two other princes, Nakul and Sahadeva. Born and brought up in the forest where the king was residing after renouncing the world, on Pandu's death, Kunti and the five princes were brought by the ascetics to the court at Hastinapur then ruled by their uncle Dhritarashtra who was born blind. The uncle had 100 sons who were known as Kauravas.

The Kaurava and Pandava princes received their education first from Kripacharya and then from Dronacharya, well known warriors. The Pandavas proved superior in the use of arms especially Arjuna excelled in archery and Bhima in

mace. The Kauravas were jealous of them and when they heard people saying that being the eldest Yudhishtira should rightfully be made the king, they designed to get rid of the Pandavas. Duryodhana succeeded in persuading his father to send the Pandavas to Varnavat where a festival was to be held. Duryodhana had arranged for the stay of Kunti and Pandavas at Varnavata in a palace full of combustibles to be set on fire in the night so as to burn them alive. Put on guard, the Pandavas set the palace on fire in the night and escaped, giving others the impression that they had perished in the fire.

The Pandavas after their escape moved from place to place. Apprehensive, they did not disclose their identity and lived as Brahmins. They came to king Drupad's capital where his daughter Draupadi's *svayamvara* was in progress. Where other princes failed, Arjuna succeeded in bending the bow and hitting the target and won Draupadi. According to their vow to share everything, the five Pandavas were married to Draupadi, though king Drupad permitted them only reluctantly on knowing of their vow to share joys and sorrows.

When Dhritarashtra heard of the Pandavas, he sent for them to Hastinapur and made over to them half of the kingdom. Yudhishtira was duly crowned king and he made Indraprastha his capital. The Pandavas proved popular rulers and after some time performed a Rajasuya Yajna. Yudhishtira was declared emperor.

But then the Kauravas were jealous. Persuaded by Duryodhana, Sakuni and Salya, Dhritarashtra invited the Pandavas to play a game of dice. As it was considered unworthy of men to refuse to play, Yudhishtira played the game against Sakuni, who played decently and Yudhishtira lost everything he had. Provoked by Sakuni, he staked even his brothers and then himself and lastly Draupadi. When Draupadi was forcibly brought to the gambling house, she protested to the elders against Yudhishtira, who was no longer free, staking her. At this the elders hung their heads in shame. Duhassana even tried to strip Draupadi off her clothes but in disgust he had to leave her as on the falling of a garment from her, she would miraculously be seen with a fresh cloth on. One of the conditions of the game was that the losers would be out in the forests for 13 years.

The Pandavas then left with Draupadī to the forests. They led a righteous life for 12 years. When the 13th year was to begin, they took up service under assumed names with king Virata of Matsya. When Virata was attacked, the Pandavas fought on his side and defeated the enemies. When the 13th year was over, they disclosed their identity. The grateful Virata married his daughter to Arjuna's son Abhimanyu. Virata, Drupad, Krishna and other kings assembled and sent peace proposals on behalf of the Pandavas to the Kauravas. But Duryodhana rejected their proposals and refused to give land even as much as a needle-point. Yudhishtira's message of his being ready for peace or war was thrown out by the Kauravas. War was inevitable.

Even in the battle field at Kurukshetra when the battle was to start, Yudhishtira put off his armour and touching the feet of Bhishma, the grandsire, sought for his benediction. He also bowed to his earlier gurus, Drona and Kripa, who were fighting on the side of Kauravas.

The 18 days war at Kurukshetra was bitterly fought. The Kaurava army consisted of 11 divisions and of the Pandavas of 8 divisions. Warrior after warrior fell from both sides. On the tenth day the invincible Bhishma fell and was incapacitated from fighting any more. Drona who took over as commander of the Kaurava army too fell. It is said that Yudhishtira himself was a great warrior and he shot dead Salya. Arjuna, with Krishna his charioteer, killed Jayadratha who had dishonourably caused the death of Abhimanyu. Finally Duryodhana ran away. But he was caught and put to death.

Sad as the memories of the war were, after reigning for a while Yudhishtira crowned his grandson Parikshit and with his brothers and Draupadī left on pilgrimage. A dog joined them. They fell on the Himalayan route one by one. The poet's idea of their being followed by a dog is that as Dharma the dog is the constant companion in the life's journey. Yudhishtira and the dog alone survived, and Dharma came to fetch him alive to the heavens. But characteristically Yudhishtira refused to leave the dog behind. Thus Yudhishtira proved the purity of his character correct.

## Charvaka

“They conceive that you ought to throw away the pleasures of life because they are mixed with pain but what prudent man will throw away unplodded rice which enclosed excellent grain because it is covered with the husk ?”

The reference is to Charvakas who philosophised that  
“There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world.

Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders etc. produce any real effect

The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three stones and smearing oneself with ashes,

Were made by Nature as the livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and manliness

If a beast slain in Jyotistoma rite will itself go to heaven

Why then does not sacrificer offer his own father,

If the Shaddha produces gratification to beings who are dead,

Then here too in the case of travellers when they start, it is needless to give provisions for the journey

If beings in heaven are gratified by our offering the Shraddha here,

Then why not give the food down below to those who are standing on the housetop ?

While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on *ghee* even though he runs in debt,

When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again ?

If he who departs from the body goes to another world,

How is it that he comes not back again restless for love of his kindred ?

Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmins have established here

All these ceremonies for the dead—there is no other fruit anywhere,

The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves and demons

And the well known formulae of the pandits, jarphari, turphan etc

And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Asvamedha,

These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the priests

While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by night prowling demons "

The above is perhaps a caricature of the thoughts of materialist philosophers, popularly known as Charvakas, after their teacher Charvaka. Unfortunately no work of theirs has come down to us, whatever little is known to us about them is through the fragments or summaries of their doctrines presented by their opponents. However, so well known, rather notorious, was Charvaka that any sceptical philosopher advocating a materialistic doctrine was dubbed as a Charvaka. But these ideas had been in vogue for long and S. Radhakrishnan in defence of the Charvakas observes that a philosophy professed seriously for centuries could not have been of the coarse kind that it is made out to be.

The misrepresentation of the Charvakas is perhaps for the reason that they denounced the authority of the Vedas and thought of the sacrificial ceremonies of Brahmins as merely tricky means of their livelihood and of the Vedic texts as being tainted by untruth, self-contradiction and tautology. Charvaka endeavoured to prove the birth of the spirit from matter by analogies from chemistry and said that when body dissolves after death the spirit too ceases to be. He, therefore, commended the pleasures of the body and ridiculed the doctrine of reward in heaven to those who sacrificed and gave presents to the greedy priests.

The Charvakas consider direct perception as the only means of arriving at the truth and do not accept inference or testimony. Since sense perception is the only form of knowledge, matter becomes the only reality. What is material is

real. The four ultimate elements viz water, air, earth and fire are real and eternal. Intelligence is the modification of the four elements and it is destroyed when the elements are dissolved. Consciousness is produced from their mixture. Given the four elements, the self-conscious life mysteriously springs forth. Thought is a function of matter. There is no need to look upon the soul (*atma*) as distinct from the body—it is only the body qualified by intelligence. From this it follows that it is foolish to think that the soul is going to reap the rewards of its acts in a future state or world—heaven or hell, neither of which is, and neither is nothing but the invention of imposters. Religion is a foolish aberration, a mental disease. God is not necessary to account for the world. Nature is absolutely dead to all human values. It is indifferent to good and bad—sun shines equally on good and evil. Charvakas consider belief in God and the other world as a sign of mendacity or cowardice. Pleasures and pains are the central facts of life. Virtue is a delusion and enjoyment the only reality. There is no need for a central passion or instinct since they are merely legacies of men.

Charvaka shook up indifference and superstition. He tried to remove the weight of the past that was oppressing the age to make room for the great constructive effort of philosophical speculation. It is however difficult to justify the gross materialism propounded by Charvaka.

Charvaka probably lived before the composition of *Ramayana* and is perhaps identical with the Charvaka of *Mahabharata*.

Brihashpati is a great materialist philosopher whose name figures as the teacher of the Asuras—the demon foes of the gods. May be Charvaka was one of these or one of their teachers or the nickname of some famous infidel. Their philosophy is also known as Lokayata.

## Panini

Panini was perhaps the first grammarian who elaborated an accurate and complete grammatical system which greatly helped the perfection of the Sanskrit language. Yet it is an irony that Panini is accused of crabbing and confining the language within the frame work of rules and regulations and thus arresting its growth. This certainly is not correct. On the contrary his work, especially the innovation of *Ganpathi*, has helped a good deal in the conservation of Sanskrit language in its undying form.

The characteristic feature of Panini's grammatical system is that it derives words from verbal roots. His *magnum opus*, the *Ashtadhyayi*, the only comprehensive code of Sanskrit grammar, consists of 3995 rules of which 3981 are *sutras* and 14 *pratyaharas*, of 32 syllables each. The *sutras* are admirable for economy of words but sometimes they lose clarity. It is however to Panini's credit that his *sutras* do not sacrifice clarity. He has succeeded in doing so by discovering his own material and applying *vrittis* or derivative meanings of word-groups.

Panini had an open mind and appreciated other's views without prejudice. For instance, there was a sharp controversy between two scholars Vajapayan and Vyadi whether a word denotes a whole class (*akriti*) or only an individual (*vyakti*). Panini, seeing the truth in either, accepted both positions. Thoroughness, utmost conciseness and brevity were the results of his ingenious mind\*.

The most important contribution of the *Ashtadhyayi* to the history of ancient India is its geographical information. It defines the country, its mountains, oceans, forests, rivers, *janpadas* etc. Panini marks the country's boundary by Kambhoj in the north, Sauviri in the west, Ashmak in the south, Kalinga in the south-east and Surmas in the east. *Ashtadhyayi* is an



important source for cultural information too. It mentions the name of Krishna Vasudeva as an ordinary human being and not as an *avatar*, and refers to the *Mahabharata* which helps in dating the works.

Not many details about Panini's life are known. Yet whatever is inferred is quite rich when compared to others of his time. Panini, after the *gotra* name of his ancestors, Panis, belonged to the fifth century B.C. On his father's side he came from a family of brilliant scholars of Sialpur, near the confluence of the Kabul with the Sindhu, and on mother's side from the Daksha clan.

At a young age Panini was sent for education to sage Varsha's *ashram*. But a restless soul Panini could not stay there for long and moved out. His wanderings in Takshasila added to his knowledge and he collected extensive information about persons, places\* and things. He also made use of the time in investigating the spoken and the living languages. And then to avoid distractions he meditated over the construction and form of language and formulated his system of grammar in the *Ashtadhyayi*, armed with which he overcame his rival Katyayana. Eventually he succeeded in replacing the old grammar.

Panini's name spread to far off places. As was customary, he visited Pataliputra to participate in a learned discourse in the court of the Nanda emperor. Panini's scholarship impressed the emperor and his minister Vararuchi with whom he developed friendly relations. Panini accepted the Mimamsa view of the eternity of sound and developed the theory of *sphota* or the indivisible unitary factor latent in every word as the vehicle of its significance.

The *Ashtadhyayi* brought Panini renown and he became a legendary figure. He superseded his predecessors of whom Yaska alone survives and that too for the reason that his work lay in the field of Vedic exegesis. Patanjali profusely eulogizes Panini's system and even now his name remains unmatched as a grammarian. As has happened so often with great men, Panini's statue was erected in his village which was seen and mentioned by Yan Chowang during his visit to India.

\* अद्यमात्रा वाप्येन पुत्रोऽसौ मयि ते वयाकरणा

परिभाषादु शब्दः—नागोजीमठ (नामेश)

Reading

V S Agarwal *Panini*

# Mahavira

(599 B. C.-526 B. C.)

Vardhamana Mahavira, commonly known as Mahāvira, was the last reformer in the long succession of twenty-four Tirthankaras (path-finders) of the Jain hagiology. But so great was Mahavira's impact that the common man mistakes him as the founder of the Jain religion.

Mahavira opposed the prevailing supremacy of the Brahmanical rites, the authority of the Vedas and the performance of the *yajnas*, typical of the Aryan hold on those times. Instead Mahavira laid stress on good conduct, respect for saints and regard for other's beliefs and practices.

According to Mahāvira the basic purpose of life is the liberation of the soul from earthly bondage i.e. transmigration. Soul can reach the pure and blissful abode only by following the three basic principles—Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Action.

Mahavira's predecessor, Tirthankar Parshva Nath had propounded four vows—non-injury, truthfulness, abstention from sterling, and non-attachment. Mahavira added a fifth vow of Brahmacharya or continence and emphasised the need of discarding all external things for attaining complete freedom from bondage.

—Jainism recommends a highly moral life without caring for bodily comforts. As a matter of fact, according to the Jain faith the body should be subjected to severe austerity and discipline for leading a moral life. Jainism teaches the annihilation of the results of past *karma* by austerity, and of the new *karma* by prevention by inactivity. When *karma* ceases, misery ceases. Ahimsa has an important place in Jainism since it attributes souls to animates as well as inanimates—to birds and beasts, plants, metals and water etc. Jains consider it

sinnful to take any life for any cause, whether in sport or in sacrifice

The central features of Jain philosophy are realistic classification of being, theory of knowledge (theory of Syadvada and Saptabhangi or seven fold mode of predication), and ascetic ethics. The Jain theory of knowledge probably owes its origin to Mahavira.

There are two sects of Jainism, namely, the Svetāmbara and the Digambara and their followers are spread in various parts of the country. The outward different mark between the two is that the followers of the former put on white clothes while those of the latter live with nothing on their body.

Vardhamana was born at Vaisali in 599 B. C., the son of Siddhartha, a Chief of Kundapura (in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district), and Trisala who was related to the ruling families of Vaisali and Magadha. He grew up to be a house holder, and on coming of age married Yasoda and had a daughter from her. Dissatisfied with the way of life and the world, at the age of 28, Vardhamana foresook the world.

For twelve long years Mahavira wandered as a naked ascetic in search of knowledge. During part of the period he kept the company of the mendicant friar Ghosala who subsequently deserted him to become the leader of the Ajivika sect. In the thirteenth year of his penance, Mahavira repaired to the banks of the river Rijupalika where on the 10th of Vaisakha he attained *keval jnan*, the highest spiritual knowledge, and became omniscient, *Jina* (conqueror of human passions) and Mahavira (the great hero).

Mahavira, as he came to be called, became the head of Nirgranthas, as Jains were then called. For the next thirty years he wandered preaching his religious system and organising his order of ascetics in Magadha (South Bihar), Videha (Tirhut) and Anga (Bhagalpur). His religious order was open to every one, including friars and nuns as also laymen male and female. He gathered a large following. The patronage of royal families helped in the spread of his teachings and kings Bimbisara and Ajatasatru adopted his doctrines. He passed away at Pawa (Patna District) in 526 B. C. at the age of 72.

Reading

Sinclair Stevenson *Heart of Jainism*

# Buddha

(C 566-486 B. C.)

When the mind grapples with a great and intricate problem, it makes its advances, it secures its position step by step, with but little realisation of the gains it has made, until suddenly with an effect of abrupt illumination, it realises its victory. So it would seem it happened with Gotama Buddha. —*H G Wells*

**S**ix centuries before Christ there lived in India Gotama, the Enlightened, who is second to none before or after him in spiritual detachment, lofty idealism nobility of life and love for humanity. Teachers, learned men, ascetics, merchants, laymen, kings, his own family members and whosoever met him bowed to his wisdom and became his disciple.

Buddha's last words to his sorrowful disciples contain the crux of his philosophy

*'We must part from all that is precious and dear to us. How should it be possible that anything that has arisen should not also pass away. Now monks, I have nothing more to tell you than this: Decay is inherent in all compounded things. Work out your salvation energetically.'*

Buddha was dedicated to humanity and to its active service. He preached the Middle Path in the common man's language, which appealed to his heart. People in large numbers flocked to listen to his sermons and were converted to his ideas because of the power of truth. Numerous conversions one time created sensation and people murmured, "the ascetic Gotama has come to bring childlessness, widowhood and subversion of families"

Buddha's technique known as the Noble Eight fold Path in nutshell is

The world is full of suffering. Man should know the four noble truths viz sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow and the paths leading to cessation of

sorrow. It can be annihilated by following the Middle Path consisting of Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Recollection and Right Meditation.

Buddha condemned both self indulgence and self mortification.

Buddha's personal name was Siddhartha and his family name Gotama. He was born the son of Suddhodhana, the chief of the Sakya clan, and Mahamaya, a princess of the Koliya tribe, at Lumbini in the year 566 B C. While only 7 days old, he lost his mother and was brought up at Kapilavastu by his aunt Prajapati. Trained in the 3 R's and martial exercises, at 16 he proved his superiority to all Sakya youths in an open challenge when he won the hand of Yasodhara, a Koliya princess. This, however, brought him the life-long enmity of his cousin Devdatta.

For more than ten years Gotama led a happy married life. He was a meditative type and his father provided him with all comforts and pleasures and segregated him from all that might mar his happiness—the sight of ills of life such as disease, decay and death. But as chance would have it, he successively met an aged man bowed down with years, a sick man scorched by fever, a corpse followed by mourners and a mendicant-friar, each of which left a mark on him. He experienced the intellectual and spiritual unrest of his age and felt a growing dissatisfaction with the world of pleasure. He wondered how people shrank from the sight of old age, sickness and death. The birth of son Rahula aggravated the tendency of his mind towards renunciation and proved a turning point of his life.

One day he decided to renounce the world to find the truth of life and taking a last look at his son and his sleeping wife he left the palace only to wander from home into homelessness. After going over some distance, he alighted from the horse, sheared off his hair and took up the yellow robe of a monk.

After a while Gotama travelled to Rajgriha where he attached himself as a disciple to Alara Kalama and later to Uddalaka, two great scholars of the time. His spiritual thirst not yet satisfied, he resolved to depend upon himself for further progress and returned to the forest near the present temple of Bodh Gaya where in the company of five Brahmin ascetics he

spent six years in self education - Buddha practised extreme austerity and tried various methods but neither austerity nor solitude of the forest could satisfy him. Physically weak and spiritually unsatisfied, he thought "With all these bitter austerities, I do not reach aught beyond the human, do not attain to any exalted knowledge and insight, might there be some other way to Enlightenment?" This inner search led him to abandon self-mortification and "to partake of solid food". The five monks about him, concluding that Gotama had ceased from striving and had turned to a life of comfort, left the place and made off to Isipatana, near Varanasi.

The Buddha took to meditation and prayer and began to beg for his food. He came to the foot of a Bodhi-tree on the full moon day of Vaisakha and sat cross legged under the tree for seven weeks determined "never from this seat will I stir until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom". In one of his deep meditations while resting under the tree, a light broke upon his mind and Gotama attained Enlightenment. He became the Buddha at the age of 38.

He preached his gospel of the Four Aryan Truths and the Eight fold Path first to the five monks, who had parted his company, at the Deer Park, Varanasi. They founded the Buddhist Sangha, a monastic order, as a refuge for the seekers of everlasting freedom and insatiable peace. The Buddha spoke

Avoid extremes of habitual devotion to passions or pleasures of sensual things and of self mortification. Adopt the Aryan Middle Eight fold Path of Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Recollections and Right Meditation which lead to peace, insight, high wisdom and Nirvana.

The Noble Middle Path consists of four noble truths: sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow, and the path leading to cessation of sorrow. The noble truth to sorrow (suffering) is: birth is attended with pain, disease is painful, death is painful, union with unpleasant is painful, separation from pleasant is painful, unsatisfied craving is painful. The noble truth to cause of sorrow: craving thirst causes the renewal of becoming with sensual delights and seeks satisfaction, having of senses for gratification.

or craving for prosperity The noble truth to cessation of sorrow - passing away of passions, getting rid of thirst by following the Eight-fold Path

This was his second sermon to the five wanderers

—The body cannot be the eternal soul for it tends towards destruction Nor do sensation, perception, predisposition and consciousness together constitute the eternal soul for these too tend towards destruction Therefore, this physical form is not mine, this am I not, this is not my eternal end The true disciple will conceive a disgust for the physical form and so will be divested of desire and thereby he is freed and becomes aware that he is freed, and he knows becoming is exhausted, that he has lived the pure life, that he has put off mortality for ever

The number of Buddha's followers started swelling He preached Uruvela Kassap at Gaya Sirsa and others at Rajgriha, where King Bimbisara and many others including Sariputta and Moggallana became his disciples The essence of the third sermon to Uruvela Kassap at Gaya was The true disciple feels disgust for sensual pleasures and is divested of desire and is freed and puts off mortality for ever

Later at the invitation of his father, Buddha visited Kapilvastu where many of his close relatives, including his parents, wife and son were converted to his teaching In the adjoining Mall country, he converted Ananda who was to keep his company till the end and at whose advocacy the Buddha agreed to found an order of nuns Buddha made no distinction amongst people on account of their vocation or status and once out of sheer humaneness accepted dinner at courtesan Amrapali's place Then one day after a dinner of rice and mushroom at a smith's at Pava, while on his way to Kusinara, Buddha was taken ill and passed away in 486 B C

Paul Dahlke says of the Buddha

Perhaps never while the world has lasted has there been a personality who has wielded such a tremendous influence over the humanity as has Gotama

# Chandragupta Maurya

(C. 322-298 B C)

He knew not only how to conquer but how to retain and preserve the conquest

Chandragupta's life is a romance of history. Rising from humble circumstances, he built up an empire stretching from Persia to South India—an empire of dimensions not known till then in the history of India. How in those times of poor communication, he could have managed and administered such vast distances remains a matter of speculation.

Chandragupta's early life is shrouded in obscurity and nothing definite is known how he came to be known as Maurya. One theory is that his father was a Moriya Chief on whose death in a strife, his wife who was in the family way fled and sought refuge in Pataliputra where she delivered her child. The child named Chandragupta was brought up first by a cowherd and later by a hunter and took the name Maurya from his clan Moriya. It is said that one day Chanakya noticed the child playing the king with other children and impressed, took him to his native place Taxila with the object of settling scores through Chandragupta with the Nandas against whom the haughty Brahmin bore some grudges. He was also motivated by the object of mobilising the country's resources and raising the people's morale to free the country from the Greek domination. Chandragupta fulfilled both the tasks very ably.

Another story that goes around Chandragupta is that he visited Alexander in his camp while the Greek was in the Punjab. Alexander felt offended and enraged at the young visitor's audacity and boldness, ordered the latter's execution. But somehow *Chandragupta managed to escape*. Perhaps Chandragupta and Chanakya recruited their army from amongst the people of the Punjab who had valiantly fought Alexander to a man in defence of their freedom. Chandra-



gupta ascended the throne in 324 B C after destroying the Nanda King

Chandragupta took full advantage of the difficulties of the Greeks who were trying under Seleucus to recover the lost possessions of Alexander. He ruthlessly put the Macedonian prefects to sword and shook off the move of Seleucus towards India. The Greeks this time faced near the Sindhu a united India under Chandragupta and were forced to buy peace by ceding some territory and also, perhaps giving a daughter of Seleucus in marriage to Chandragupta. They also sent an ambassador to Pataliputra.

Nothing definite is known of Chandragupta's subsequent career. But there is no doubt that his life was spent mostly in military campaigns. His army consisting of 6 lakh men suppressed small rulers. By decentralising administration after splitting up the unwieldy and distant areas and by creating manageable units under provincial governors he solved problems of distance and communication. Not only the palace and the beautiful capital were well protected, the provinces too were well secured under princes. The 1150 mile long road from Pataliputra to the North West Frontier that he availed of made administration easier. Peace, prosperity and contentment prevailed amongst the people, and theft, even when houses remained unguarded, was a very rare occurrence.

Chandragupta had known adversity and led a hard life. He did not fall a prey to a life of ease and luxury. It is recorded "He does not sleep during the day time but remains in court during the whole day for purposes of judging cases and other public business."

According to Jain traditions, Chandragupta in his last days renounced the world and followed the Jain migration led by Bhadrabahu to Sravana Belgola, in South India, where it is said he fasted unto death.

Chandragupta Maurya's greatness lies in unifying the country politically and securing it from foreign domination.

#### Reading

R K Mookerji *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*  
*Cambridge History of India Vol I*

# Chanakya

(4th Century B C )

Chanakya, the partronymic of Kautilya, and also named Vishnugupta, is credited with the authorship of *Artha sastra*, a compendium of political thought. It is said that Chanakya helped Chandragupta in overthrowing the Nandas and capturing the Magadha empire. No less important a part did his ingenuity play in making the Greeks ineffective in Northern India. The latter could not retain their foothold in the Punjab where Alexander had defeated Porus.

Chanakya belonged to Taxila. A scholar, he moved about the seats of learning in the north and the east. Once on receiving a raw deal from the ruling Nandas of Pataliputra, he, an obstinate Brahmin, decided to join hands with the forces that might help overthrow the Nanda dynasty. Legend is that on his return journey he met somewhere in the Vindhya forests Chandragupta, an ambitious young man who had escaped the Greek army. Chandragupta had offended Alexander and when the latter's army tried to lay its hands on him, Chandragupta escaped and was seeking refuge in the Vindhya forests when Chanakya met him. They exchanged their thoughts and became friends.

As luck would have it, Chandragupta and Chanakya found a treasure hidden underground. Now they were in a position to engage persons and raise an army. The combination of the military skill of Chandragupta and the astute diplomacy of Chanakya finally succeeded in overthrowing the iniquitous rule of the Nandas. Chandragupta was anointed as the king of Magadha and Chanakya became his Chief Minister.

The famous Sanskrit drama *Mudra Rakshasa* presents Chanakya as a Machiavelian who played an important role in disposing of Parvataka and his brother Vairochaka the chief

allies of Chandragupta. By meting the same fate to foes and friends alike, Chanakya helped Chandragupta in consolidating his rule

Chanakya distilled from the ocean of *Arthasastra* the quintessence of *Nitisastra*. His *Arthasastra*, a work of exceptional interest and value, makes a practical approach and states that the end justifies the means. The work belongs to the period 320 B C — 310 B C. Since it is a unique work of its sort, it would be appropriate to give a gist of its contents (running into 6000 *slokas*)

According to Chanakya only absolute monarchy is good for the country's administration. The monarch should be well versed in religion, philosophy and economics because these affect the common man's life. The king should practise self control and protect his own and his subjects, lives from enemies through whatever means, such as employment of spies and agents both at home and abroad, intrigue, unscrupulous use of poisons, desperadoes and prostitutes, magic and charms etc. The king should protect his people from eight calamities, namely, fire, floods, diseases, famine, rats, wild elephants, serpents and evil spirits. He should provide remedies for these calamities.

The king should maintain good relations with foreign countries. According to Chanakya seeking an oligarchy on one's side is better than securing an army or an ally for *sanghas* being well knit become unassailable by enemies. Whereas friendly *sanghas* may be won by giving gifts or through reconciliation, others may be won by sowing dissension and force. According to him the six forms of state policy are based on degrees of neutrality or alliance and the king should know when and how to avoid war but if begun it should be prosecuted wholeheartedly. He should know whether the weaker or the stronger is to be attacked first. He should try to reduce a strong foe by means of spies, assassins, poison and women. He should also know how to capture an enemy by supernatural means, injuring him by secret means, luring out and capturing an enemy king by stratagem and in the last resort by direct attack. Sometimes it is good to pacify the enemy with the conquered territory.

A king should keep off vices and calamities which

may threaten a kingdom Gambling weakens a government, it is a vice and the king should keep off it

In the conduct of administration, inspectors should control various aspects of citizen's life—say right from collection of taxes to the presentation of fire The ministers' duties are assigned and so are the methods described as to how to get rid of untrustworthy ministers The treasury needs to be replenished and the state servants given salaries regularly

Kautilya also lays down civil and criminal laws, punishment for crimes, methods of extorting confessions and different types of administration for villages and cities

Chanakya was perhaps Vishnugupta's *gotra* name Or may be, he took it after the name of his village Chanak or his father Chanak He had read extensively on statecraft, was a man of simple habits and without much personal ambition

Compared to Manu, Chanakya was more liberal in regard to the transfer of ownership of property to one's wife and to daughter on one's death He also favoured the idea of Niyoga

Chanakya is the greatest Indian exponent of the art of government, duties of kings, ministers and officers and methods of diplomacy It is for his cunningness that Chanakya has been called the Machiavelli of India Kautilya literally means one of marked intelligence

#### Reading

- Kautilya *Arthashastra* (translation by Nilakantha Sastri)  
V Smith *Early History of India*

# Asoka

(C. 304-232 B.C.)

What entitles Asoka to be known as Asoka the Great is his conquest of people's hearts through the practice of *dharma*, something unusual for monarchs who regarded territorial expansion symbolic of their authority and greatness. And so intense was Asoka's piety and religiosity that his missionary work and message reached far off lands. In the history of the world very few kings ever devoted themselves so much as he to the welfare of the governed.

Not that Asoka had no territorial ambitions. On the contrary, he waged a ruthless war in 262 B.C. against Kalinga which he won. But it was the severe consequences of war—thousands of people were killed and wounded—that changed the course of Asoka's life. Human suffering in the war worked a revolution in his character, and he determined not to wage a war in future and attached himself earnestly to the humane creed of non violence.

Asoka foreswore and forbade war and found solace in Buddhism. He focused his attention on the observance of peace between men and all sentient creatures and extended the principle of non violence to lower animals. For the welfare and happiness of mankind, he published religious proclamations and messages on rocks and pillars which are a triumph of architectural sculpture. A message for instance was

"All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness in this world and the next, so also do I desire the same for all men"

He appointed Dharma Mahamartas to spread *dharma*, mitigate the wrongs and rigours of justice and superintend the affairs of the councils governing different sects. But when Asoka noticed that there were conflicts amongst them, he called

for a Buddhist Council in 253 B C. under the presidentship of Mogalliputta Tissa (also known Upagupta) at Pataliputra After this he sent monks to different parts of the world His own son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra carried a mission to Ceylon

To realise his high conception of imperial duties and responsibilities, Asoka prohibited sacrificial slaughter as also killing of animals for his own kitchen What appealed to his mind more were not the external elements of religion, rituals and regulations but the aid *dharma* gave to inner development of self realisation He preferred and applied regulations to the spiritual life Well did he say, "The true glory and fame of a king do not rest upon the physical extent of his dominion, but upon the moral progress he can help his people to achieve" He declared that "The chief conquest is the conquest of right and not of might"

In spite of his devotion to and zeal for Buddhism, Asoka was tolerant towards other religions While encouraging discussions among different religious schools, he deprecated criticism without reason He maintained that he who reveres his own sect but disparages other sects just to enhance the splendour of his own sect by his conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect

Asoka was a mighty builder of cities He built Srinagar in Kashmir and Deopatan in Nepal, 84000 Stupas, of which only those at Sanchi and Sarnath have been unearthed, Viharas, monasteries, monolithic pillars, stone columns bearing inscriptions, artistic sculptures etc He also provided magnificent irrigation work It is a tribute to his greatness that the capital of the Asoka's column of the Sarnath cave was adopted as independent India's symbol

Born in 304 B C, Asoka ascended the Mauryan throne on the death of his father Bimbisara in 274 B C It is said that to get the throne Asoka slaughtered his 99 brothers

"Asoka gave to his empire certain principles of administration which in their breadth of vision and outlook, their spirit of humanity and internationalism are an inspiration even to the modern world He based his empire upon the principle of *ahimsa*, universal peace, peace between man and man, and between man and every small creature so that it was an empire

of righteousness, an empire resting on right and not on might .”

Very few in history can match Asoka's piety and humane-ness and he rightly deserves the titles of Devanampriya (beloved of the gods) and Priyadarsi (good to look at) which he had assumed at the time of his accession Under him India reached the high watermark of her material and moral progress

Reading

R. K Mookerji *Asoka*

V Smith *Asoka*

D R Bhandarkar *Asoka*

# Patanjali

(2nd Century B C)

Man's life is subject to afflictions from ignorance, desire, aversion, ego and attachment, ignorance being the root cause of all afflictions. Yoga destroys ignorance and helps man in attaining the freedom of the soul. This is how philosopher Patanjali thought about his system of Yoga some twenty-two hundred years ago. But nothing certain about his 'mass' following is known to us. Whatever might that have been, in the present century Yoga has caught the imagination and today it is familiar to the youngsters and philosophers, as well as with medicalmen and physiologists.

Yoga, for Patanjali, was a methodical effort to attain perfection through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical. It aims at the intentional stoppage of the spontaneous activities of the mind, whether these be the impressions received from outside or stimuli from within. Through the practice of spiritual exercises Yoga helps man to cleanse his body and mind of the stain of evil and secures for him control over his mental state, thus it leads to freedom from attachment to worldly objects.

Yoga recommends physical and mental disciplines in eight stages namely *yam* (internal control), *niyam* (external control), *asan* (bodily posture), *pranayam* (control of breath), *pratyahar* (withdrawal of senses from outside world), *dharan* (fixity of attention), *dhyam* (concentration) and *samadhi* (attentive self realisation). *Yam* consists of *ahimsa*, *sattva* (truthfulness), *asteja* (abstention from stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *aparigraha* (freedom from covetousness). *Niyam* on the other hand has the elements of *souch* (cleanliness), *santosh* (contentment), repetition of hymns and worship of God. *Yam* and *niyam* help in overcoming egoistic impulses and lead to detachment from worldly objects. The *asanas* keep the backbone



PATANJALI

straight and the *pranayam* enables the yogi to have control over his thought. *Pratyahar* too helps secure control over mind. *Dharan* and *dhyān* assist in getting mastery over mind. Contemplation may have an object, idea or image. When the yogi gets over these stages, for him the outside world vanishes and the senses no longer perceive it. In *samadhi* the mind merges with the object of meditation and time and space are overcome.

Yoga ends sloth and sickness, vacillation of mind and want of faith, ardent attachment to senses defects in breathing and in other functions of the body. It also inculcates in man friendliness towards the virtuous pity towards persons in distress and indifference to the sinful. Thus it helps purification of mind and, in mental comprehension of the soul, the yogi can conceive correctly the nature of things in the world. He can attain supernormal powers. But a true yogi shuns acquiring these powers.

The yoga technique insists on the acquisition of self-realisation gradually. The ascent is slow, each step has to be firmly secured before the next. By constant practice the yogi gains release from the debility of old age. With the aid of renunciation he is freed from the recurrence of rebirths then he is liberated—he attains salvation.

Patanjali propounded his thoughts in the *Yog Sutra*. It is said that Patanjali wrote the *Mahabhashya* a commentary on Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*. But nothing is known whether the two books were authored by two persons of the same name or by one person. He has also been called Gonardiya and Gonika putra. Patanjali literally means one fallen in the palm and a legend is that he fell as a small snake in the palm of Panini. Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* is a rich source of information on social, historical and other aspects of his time. For instance, it informs that students used to flock to Pataliputra for study, Pushyamitra performed a horse sacrifice after the assassination of the last Mauryan emperor in which Patanjali officiated as the high priest. For centuries Patanjali dominated the country's thought. The revival of Yoga has now brought its author again to the limelight.

Reading

S Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy*  
Also see Notes for Hathayoga

# Charaka

## (2nd Century B.C.)

An assembly of sages somewhere in the Himalayas a few hundred years before the birth of Christ discussed how to alleviate suffering and guide people to lead a long and healthy life. The proceedings of the assembly are not known to us but we know that sage Atreya Punarvasu urged his six disciples to compile a treatise each. The six did try their hand but only the treatise by Agnivesha was found of a high standard. This was in the form of questions and answers by the disciple Agnivesha and Guru Atreya. The *Agnivesha Samhita*, as it came to be known, has guided medicalmen since then. But then new experiences were gained and more knowledge accumulated and a need for revision of the Samhita was felt. This Samhita was revised so well by Charaka that the later generations forgot the earlier title and called it *Charaka Samhita*. Although afterwards the need for further revision was felt and a revision too was carried out by Dradabhal of Kashmir in the ninth century, the work has continued to bear its first redactor's name and is known by the name *Charaka Samhita*.

*Charaka Samhita* is an exposition of Ayurveda, which Charak defines as the science of causes and symptoms of disease, medication and health. It covers 10 specific subjects, viz anatomy, physiology, etiology, pathology, treatment, objectives, influence of age and season, physicians, medicines and appliances and procedure and sequence. It also deals with the origin of medical science, the fundamental causes of conception and birth and physical deformities.

Charaka's medicine has a philosophical basis, namely the emancipation of soul is the purpose of life which could not be achieved by rituals, ceremonies, invocations, austerities or asceticism, salvation can possibly be attained by an individual by realising truth or attaining perfect knowledge by identifying

himself with everything in the wide world or alternatively by developing capability to perceive the unity of the world. Any-way the first thing necessary to understand is that sound body and sound mind help in attaining dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. Ayurveda provides information as to how it is possible to have a sound body and sound mind. To know what a sound body is we need to know of what the body is composed of.

Charaka thinks that man and matter are not two separate entities, they are an integral whole and are manifestations of Brahman. They are composed of five elements (mahabhutas), viz. earth, water, fire, ether, and air, each of which contributes something towards their formation, e.g., earth contributes hardness, water confers fluidity, fire the body-heat, air the breath and ether the bodily orifices. Besides these five elements, three other things viz. atman (self), buddhi (intelligence) and ahamkar (ego) also help in the composition of living things. The totality of substances is constituted by the elements of spirit, mind, time and space—but these cannot live singly or without purpose. The question is how does conscious perception arise? Châraka's reply is that it is not accidental but that it arises in a *purusha* from the fusion of atman, mind, senses and sense objects. The *Purusha* is eternal, all-pervading and changeless—it is not manifest to the senses and cannot be realised except through inference.

Life starts in the mother's womb with contributions from the mother, father, spirit and the elements. For conception all these are necessary. If the spirit does not descend the conception fails to occur. But when it does, it permeates the ingredients and creates with the elements its own body within no time. The spirit in the embryo is the embodied soul—which is eternal and, in a sense—therefore, there is no birth. Birth is the mere transition of the already existing sperm, ovum and spirit. Both life and spirit are without beginning and neither is antecedent to the other.

The semen of the male contains minute elements which to some extent determine the physiological features of the offspring. But offsprings do not necessarily carry the father's features or his constitutional defects. The embryo's sex, stature and complexion are affected by the mother's blood,

father's semen, parent's intake of nutritive food and past *karma*, and its mental traits are determined by the state of mind of the individual in previous birth. If in previous birth the individual was an animal, the born individual will be mentally impure and dull. This thinking of Charaka conflicts with the modern approach.

The foetus develops for nine months, passing through various stages. Any disturbance at this time affects the foetus. It is, therefore, necessary that proper care of the mother is taken. She should get specified diet, prophylactic treatment and be able to maintain emotional harmony.

Here Charaka introduces his theory of *doshas*. The normal health of an individual depends right from conception till death on the balance of the three humors (*doshas*) viz., *vayu*, *pitta* and *kapha*, any imbalance in their composition is likely to result into disease. The pathological conditions of the body and mind of an individual, and his diet and action too, affect the humors. The physician should try to correct the imbalances and relieve the aggravated humors by proper diet.

Heat, according to Charaka, is the basis of life process, when it dies out, life also comes to an end. The heat depends on the intake of food which nourishes the body by forming blood, flesh, fat etc. The body has some fluid currents which convey nutrients and healing matters to the different parts of the body in need of these. They also carry away decaying and harmful products from parts of the body. Digestion of food is, therefore, an important factor for health. Charaka lays stress not only on the suitability of the food but also on tastes which have inherent properties of hormones, lightness, coldness, heat, oiliness and dryness. Charaka describes the beneficial physiological action of the substances of food taken by man. Thus with the taste as guide, all edibles and medicines taken in the right measure prove beneficial.

Charaka lays stress on right conduct for preserving the physical and mental health. He enjoins constant vigilance, *regular routine and prophylactic measures for the maintenance of health and vigour*. He states that the body fluids can be replenished by proper medicines and even in old age a man can regain youth. Rationalisation is a predominant feature of *Charaka Samhita*.

When did Charaka live ? Nothing certain is known. The Chinese sources make him a contemporary of Kanishka and state that he helped the queen when she was in a critical condition. Others assign him to the 6th century B.C. Charaka was a great wanderer, which is also the meaning of his name.

#### Reading

P. C. Ray *History of Hindu Chemistry*

P. Roy & H. N. Gupta *Charaka Samhita (A Scientific Synopsis)*

# Susruta

(2nd Century B C )

Susruta is the greatest surgeon of Indian history His *Susruta Samhita* is a rich source of information on surgery practised centuries before Christ Besides, it also contains surgical experiences of older surgeons and scattered facts of the vast range of Vedic literature e g , classified surgical operations grouped under heads such as extractions of solid bodies (*aharya*), excising (*bhedya*), incising (*chhedya*), probing (*aishya*), scarifying (*lekhya*), suturing (*simya*), puncturing (*vedhya*) and evacuating fluids (*visravaniya*) Susruta lists 125 instruments for conducting operations But he had an open mind and permits surgeons to devise new instruments depending on exigencies of which they would be the best judge

Susruta prescribes certain precautions which should be observed before and after operations The patient should be asked to take light refreshment in all types of operations excepting that of the mouth in which case he should fast before the operation Further, the room should be fumigated with the vapours of white mustard, *nimbo* leaves and resinous gums of *sal* trees He also gives elaborate instructions in regard to care and general management of the patient after operations

Surgery had advanced to great heights in ancient India The surgeons conducted even plastic surgery Doctor Hirschberg observes, "The whole plastic surgery in Europe took a new flight when these cunning devices of Indian workmen became known to us" The transplantation of skin flaps is entirely of Indian origin Susruta first successfully demonstrated the feasibility of moving a captured lobe with a patch of sensible skin flap scrapped from the neck or its adjoining parts Similarly he could reduce hernia and ruptures, remove haemorrhoids and fistula and perform abdominal sections His treatment of intestinal complications is interesting He says that in

case of injury to intestines, 'the protruded part should be gently replaced by following with the finger', and if need be the surgeon should enlarge the wound by means of a knife. The cases of severance had their own original approval. Susruta in such cases advised holding together of intestines by applying living black ants to their ends and cutting of their bodies (leaving only heads) to serve the same purpose which now an animal tissue like catgut serves. The intestine in the abdominal cavity and the external opening should be stitched and properly dressed.

Susruta also gives instructions in regard to perineal incision for lithotomic operations. In cases to operations of kidney, bladder and urethra, Susruta wants the surgeon-physician to take note of colour of the urine or if a stone is to be removed from urethra, to do so with the help of Anuvasanam etc., failing which the penis should be cut open and the concretion extracted with the help of a hook.

In Susruta's time a surgeon had to attend to soldiers wounded on the battle-field and in order to localise the shafts of arrows embedded in the body and to ascertain their exact location he makes a mention of medicinal plasters. Sometimes limbs had to be amputated, and fractures and dislocations set right. The patients were given medicinal wines as anaesthesia. Ophthalmic diseases received close attention of the surgeons. Susruta discovered the art of cataract crouching and held that of the 76 types of ophthalmic diseases 51 were surgical.

Susruta's contribution to practical mid-wifery is quite remarkable. He describes turning, flexing, gliding movements, application of forceps in difficult labour cases and other obstetric operations involving the destruction and mutilation of the child. Caesarian section, he advocates should be effected only in hopeless cases of obstruction, i.e. where the proportion between the child and maternal passage is defective and plasters and fumigation won't help natural delivery. Susruta also gives direction in respect of management of puerperal state, lactation and management of the child and choice of a wet nurse.

A practical surgeon that Susruta was, he advocated the indispensability of dissection of dead bodies by a student of surgery. "Without practice he is like a one-winged bird that

is incapable of flight. The pupils should train their knives repeatedly first on natural and artificial objects resembling the diseased parts of the body before undertaking an actual operation." The quartered sacrificial arrivals afforded excellent materials for the framing of comparative anatomy. But Susruta makes a mistake in his statement that the body has 300 bones and this has been variously explained by his supporters.

Susruta writes about conception, birth and medicines also. It has ever been a man's curiosity to know in advance whether the child to be born will be male or female or that a woman can plan in advance to have a child of the desired sex. Susruta throws light on this subject and suggests snuffing of herbs and rules of diet and conduct. Surprisingly he propounds the theory that in exceptional circumstances, even without sexual union an unfertilised ovum may give rise to a perfect offspring—in this he approximates the present day theory of parthenogenesis.

Like Charaka, Susruta also accounts that imbalance in *tri-doshas* leads to disease. For therapeutical purpose he lays stress on diet, use of medicinal oils, metals, besides hygiene and public health. He also deals with hydrophobia, snake-bite and poisoning. Students of the Ayurvedic system are of the view that he was the first medical man to show that in colitis goat's milk is an efficient agent to check the ferment in intestines and the close contact with goat a powerful auxiliary agent in curing tuberculosis phthisis.

Nothing certain about Susruta's time is known. However most historians place him in 2nd century B.C. and are of the opinion that he came from the sub-Himalayan region. A fantastic theory has been advanced by Dr. Hass that Susruta was not of Indian origin. He says "Susruta is the Indian adaptation of the Arabic name Suqrat which is a confusion with Buqrat, the Arabic corruption of the great name Hippocrates and that the Kasi of Susruta is actually Cos, the birth place of Hippocrates." Such a great surgeon was Susruta that Westerners have tried to distort names to claim that his origin was Western.

Reading

K. L. Bhishagaratna *Susruta Samhita*



# Gunadhya

(1st Century B.C.)

Gunadhya is the author of *Brihatkatha* (Great Romance) which is reputed to be a store house of the country's stories and fables and comparable with *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The work is in great style and that too in Paishachi, a language of the people considered till then unworthy for literary expression. But by taking to this language, he set a model for the pundits who considered Sanskrit as the only suitable vehicle of literature.

To this celebrated work many other great works composed centuries afterwards owe their origin e.g., Buddhaswamin's *Brihatkatha sholakasangraha* (8th century), Kshemendra's *Brihatkathamajari* (1050), Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagar* (11th century). The reverential references to Gunadhya's work by well known writers like Dandin, Subandhu and Bana reveal the esteem in which they held Gunadhya's work.

Gunadhya, it is said, gave up writing in Sanskrit and Prakrit, when he lost a wager with author Sarvavarman that Sanskrit could be taught in 6 months and he took to Paishachi, also known as Bhoot-Bhasha, i.e., the language of the ghosts. Having lost the wager, Gunadhya wandered disconsolate in the Vindhya region where he met Kanbhuti from whom he learnt a good many stories that the narrator had himself learnt from Vararuchi. Gunadhya recorded these in *Brahatkatha*. The stories are mainly of voyages taken by merchants on the high seas. The hero of the *Brihatkatha* is a son of Udayan who is distressed at the loss of his wife Madan Manjuka who was maltreated by Manavega. The king finds her and wins a war against the Vidyadharas who were responsible for the mishap.

It is said that originally *Brihatkatha* consisted of 7 stories running into 7 lakh verses but the author let perish six of the

stories in mortification at the neglect with which he was received by the king. It is a pity that even that seventh Paishachi story saved by the king is non-extant today and whatever we have are a few minor fragments of it.

Gunadhya, a resident of Pratisthan, is said to have been a contemporary of the Satavahana kings, and probably a minister to one of them. He refers to Pataliputra 'as the home of culture, learning and fine arts and the queen of the cities of the world'. Besides, testifying to the sea trade, *Brihatkatha* also shows how women of all classes enjoyed freedom and even took intoxicants. In a historical perspective the book shows that the Tantric form of worship was predominant in Gunadhya's times. The work is valuable in that it presents in the common man's language conditions prevalent in the author's times.

Paishachi according to some historians was a language of the Vindhya region and according to others spoken in Kashmir.

#### Reading

R. G. Bhandarkar *Early History of the Deccan*

# Kharavela

## (1st century B C.)

**K**haravela, the third king of the Cheta dynasty of Kalinga, extended the boundaries of his empire and made a bold bid for suzerain power Kalinga, under him, reached the zenith of glory and his achievements are recorded in the Hathigumpha Inscription of the Udayagiri Hills, near Bhuwaneswar

Born in 43 B C , Kharavela spent the first 15 years of his life receiving physical instructions in different branches of study considered necessary for a crown prince In his 16th year he was consecrated to the office of the heir-apparent and on completion of 24th year of age, in the year 19 B C , he was crowned king

From the beginning, Kharavela devoted himself to public welfare In the first year of his reign, he completed certain works of public utility, e g , repairs of walls and gateways destroyed by storm, construction of tanks and provision of recreation to his subjects in Kalinganagar Later he extended a canal and bestowed large favours on the people, both urban and rural

Kharavela was a great warrior and from the very second year of his rule, he waged wars against his neighbours He defied the power of Satakarni and compelled the Rashtrikas and Bhajakas to submit Later he stormed Gorathagiri (Gaya District), harassed and overcame the power of Rajagriha and commemorated the victory by building a palace of victory He reclaimed the ruins of the old city of Pithunda He also broke a confederacy of the Tamil states in the South and created consternation amongst the people of Magadha Brihaspatimitra, the ruler of Magadh, submitted to him Kharavela avenged Kalinga's earlier ignominy at the hands of Nandas who had taken away an image of Jina from Kalinga The

image was restored. The inscription also refers to Kharavela's victory over the Pandyas from whom he brought gems and pearls in large numbers. He adorned the hill tops and by the thirteenth year of his reign—after which nothing is known of him—he built caves for the Arhats in the Kumari Hills.

In war and in piety, Kharavela excelled the rulers of his times. Although he himself was a follower of Jain religion, he was liberal towards other religions.

In his approach and outlook Kharavela was completely secular. He respected other religions and even repaired places of worship of other faiths. Well-versed in the *Sastras* and arts, he was renowned as Rajarshi. He encouraged learning and patronised scholars.

#### Reading

R. D. Banerji, *History of Orissa*

# Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni

## (1st century A.D )

A series of shifting scenes, some brilliant, some terrible and some common, but all of them dynamic—that is the description of the Satavahana reign in Western India. The highlights were an epic contest to check the advancing Kshatrapas towards South, a memorable rise of art and architecture in the rock cut caves on the West and of structural stupa-complexes in the East, development of Prakrit literature, and stimuli to trade, industry, maritime and colonial activities. The power and prestige of the dynasty rose to great heights during the reign of Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni.

Gautamiputra was his metronymic, which he took from his mother, Devi Balasri, of Brahmanical origin, and Satakarni the surname of his father, a Kshatriya king. Satavahana, the dynastic name, indicates that they were Suryavanshis, 'Satavahana' means 'he whose vehicle is drawn by seven horses' i.e. the progeny of the sun.

Equipped with the training necessary for princes, Gautamiputra ascended the throne in 72 A.D. For sixteen years he consolidated his power and then he started a war against the well entrenched Kshaharatas, foreigners who had made inroads in the country. By incessant war and diplomacy, he succeeded in rooting out the opponents Nahapan and Ushavadata as also the Saka, Yavana and Pahlava settlers who were either put to sword or driven out. In the eighteenth year of his reign he celebrated his victories and assumed the title of Raja Raja. He re struck the Nahapan coins and founded a town. It appears, because of his illness or military preoccupation towards the close of his reign, he associated his mother with the administration. Some view that by 95 A.D., when he passed away, the frontiers of his empire extended from shore to shore. His exploits are inscribed in the Nasik Prasasti.

put up by his mother after 20 years of his death. The *Prasasti* has been described as 'the funeral oration of a disconsolate mother'.

✓ If Gautamiputra was great in war, he was greater in peace. His brilliance as a soldier was supported by statesmanship and a sense of public duty. His administration was based upon the twin foundations of sastric injunctions and humanism. He was a great social reformer and gave special attention to the weak, the poor and the suffering. Though he was a Hindu and patronised the Vedic religion, he was solicitous to the welfare of the Buddhist community on which he bestowed lands and other favours. Nagarjuna, the famous exponent of the Madhyamic school of Buddhism, was a personal friend of his. An epistle (known as *Suhrillekha*) written by Nagarjuna to Gautamiputra has been preserved in the Buddhist collection.

As for the period of Sri Satakarni, authorities differ. Some are of the view that he died in 95 A D, yet others reckon his reign from 106 A D to 130 A D.

#### Reading

K A N Sastri: *A H story of South India*

# Kanishka

(2nd Century A. D.)

The Empire State skyscraper, 1472 ft high, in New York commands a majestic view. Built in the recent past it arrests the attention of every visitor. The Qutb Minar of Delhi, about 490 ft high and perhaps the tallest and one of the few old structures of India, still draws crowds daily. A Stupa 600 feet high built more than 1800 years ago by King Kanishka at his capital, Peshawar, excited wonder and admiration of travellers for centuries.

But more than this Stupa, Kanishka is known for his contributions to religion, literature and culture. He convoked probably in Kashmir (some name Gandhara and Jullundur) the great Buddhist Council where the Buddhist theologians met at a monastery called the Kundala Vana Vihara, chiefly for the purpose of collecting manuscripts and preparing commentaries on them. The Council drew Buddhist monks and scholars from various corners of the world. Vasumitra acted as its president and Asvaghosha as vice president.

Kanishka succeeded Vima Kadaphises and ruled for 23 years. He perhaps conquered vast territories from Kujula-Kara Kadaphises and appropriated the latter's title 'Devaputra'. He exercised sway over a great empire extending from Bihar in the east to Khorasan in the west and from Khotan in the north to the Konkan in the south. He successfully led expeditions against the rulers of Saketa and Pataliputra. Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* refers to his rule jointly with Hushka and Jushka over Kashmir.

Conquests over vast territories emboldened Kanishka. Feeling that, "I have subjugated three regions, all men have taken refuge with me; the region in the north alone has not come to make its submission", he tried to assert his equality with the Chinese emperor by demanding in 87 (or 90 ?) A.D.

a Chinese princess in marriage. The proposal was considered an affront by Pan-Chao, the Chinese leader and he fought a battle with Kanishka's army. Kanishka had despatched a force of 70000 cavalry under his viceroy across the Tungdumbash Pamir. Unfortunately the passage through the mountains caused them great suffering and when it reached the plains below, it failed to deliver the goods.

Kanishka is remembered for founding the Saka era (of AD 78), his regnal reckoning was continued by his successors. Although he was a Kushan, and strictly speaking not a Saka, the latter term was used to include all kindred tribes. It is a pity that the time of birth and death of the person who introduced a 'new era' are now not known.

Kanishka was a great patron of learning. Famous poets, philosophers and scientists adorned his court. Some of these were poet Asvaghosha, philosopher Nagarjuna, medical-man Charak, theologian Sangharakshaka and minister Mātthara. These and others like the great engineer Agesilans 'played a leading part in the religious, literary, scientific, philosophical and artistic activities of the reign'. Surprisingly his coins do not show Buddha whose follower he was, instead they represent Greek, Sumerian, Elemaite Persian and non Buddhist Indian deities. There are now no traces of the town 'Kanishkapur' that he founded or of the monuments, including *chaityas* and *mathas*, that he built for giving shelter to the monks, nor of his own life like statue. Over the centuries these have withered away, some at the hands of nature and others at the hands of marauders.

#### Reading

Rhys Davids *Buddhist India*



## Asvaghosha

(2nd Century A. D.)

It is said of Asvaghosha (which literally means 'sound of the horse') that his sermons had such telling effect that horses started shedding tears on hearing him and would not even touch fodder while he spoke

Asvaghosha was the twelfth Buddhist patriarch for whom, 'there was no problem he could not solve, no argument, he could not refute, he overcame his adversary as easily as the storm wind breaks a rotten tree' Tradition makes Asvaghosha a protege of Kanishka

He probably came from the eastern part of the country and was converted to Buddhism by Vasumitra, the president of the Buddhist Council Initially Asvaghosha adhered to the Samastivada school of Buddhism but was later attracted by the Buddhist doctrine of serving grace He had such a forceful personality that he became one the forerunners of Mahayana School

Asvaghosha's philosophy is known as Tathat according to which everything, including the phenomenal world, is unreal and illusory There is neither being nor cessation of it, there is neither bondage nor escape from it It cannot be called void or not void or both or neither For purposes of identification it is however, called the void The ultimate reality is, anyway, undefinable and can be attained only by intuition

Asvaghosha was an erudite scholar and had a complete grip over language He turned various literary forms of Sanskrit in simple style to the best advantage of his new faith He expressed his ideas in his five works namely, *Buddhacharita*, *Sutralankar*, *Sariputraprakarana*, *Probodhachandrodaya*, and *Sounderananda*

In *Buddhacharita* Asvaghosha describes vividly Buddha's life upto the time he converts disciples to his faith at Varanasi

Some scholars are of the view that there is close resemblance in the narrative of this work of Asvaghosha and that of the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. The *Sariputraprakaran* deals with the conversion of Sariputra and Moudgalayan by the Buddha. Asvaghosha has wit and makes the Vidushaka tell Sariputra, "This lesson does not appear palatable for such Brahmans as we are". To this Sariputra promptly replies, "Medicine heals the sick though administered by one of the inferior caste. Does water not give vigour to the person oppressed by heat, when it has been offered to him by somebody of a low caste". A third work of Asvaghosha features allegorical characters such as wisdom, fame etc. The fourth one has for characters a courtesan, a clown, and others. Asvaghosha's citation of the *Manavadharma* is found only in the *Manusmriti*. The topic of *Sounderananda* is the legend of the conversion of the reluctant Nanda by Buddha.

Asvaghosha was renowned for composing beautiful songs. One of these, the *Gandistotragatha* displays great metrical skill and attributes his comprehension to the power of music; it is an effort to describe in words the religious message carried to the heart of men.

Asvaghosha composed a beautiful play titled *Rashtrapal* in a pure, elegant style, harmonising in it beauty and sadness. The play deals with sorrow, vacuity and impersonality, all that constitutes the illusory world. The three worlds imprison the man and it is impossible for him to be happy in any of these. In composing the song, Asvaghosha was motivated by the desire of the residents of Pataliputra amongst whom he preached his religious views.

Asvaghosha was a son of Suvarnakshi. He was born at Saket and was fully conversant with Brahmanical thought before going over to Buddhism. He was an excellent musician and travelled about with a band of male and female singers. He composed music and played and sang with his choir melancholy songs about the variety of existence which the crowds enjoyed. Thus he won over many to Buddhism.

Reading •

Winternitz *A History of Indian Literature*

Keith *History of Sanskrit Literature*

## Nagarjuna

(2nd Century A. D.)

‘Nagarjuna is the subtlest metaphysician the world has yet produced,’ this is how a critic observes about this Buddhist philosopher. Writing in the same vein, S Radhakrishnan says, “We have in Nagarjuna one of the greatest thinkers of India, a far more vigorous sifting of the contents of experience than in either the subjectivists or the realists’

Nagarjuna founded the Madhyamika School (Middle Doctrine) of Mahayana, one of the two branches of Buddhism, the other being Hinayana. The Mahayana, literally the great vehicle, stood for carrying with it the majority, whereas Hinayana, the ‘smaller vehicle’ limited its scope to a limited number in society. Nagarjuna propounded his philosophical thoughts of Sunyavad in the *Madhyamika Sutras*. With this, his fame spread and disciples came to him from all corners. One of them was a prominent Ceylonese named Aryadeva who later succeeded the master.

Aryadeva came to meet Nagarjuna to solve his difficulties about the doctrine. When a pupil announced him to the master, the latter sent out to the visitor his begging bowl filled with pure water. Aryadeva threw a needle into the bowl which gently settled at the bottom. Nagarjuna was delighted at the eloquent silence of the visitor. When asked by the pupil what it meant, Nagarjuna explained that the bowl with water signified his own pure knowledge and by throwing needle into it Aryadeva meant that he had reached the very bottom of that knowledge. The visitor was well received and later Nagarjuna appointed him as his successor.

Nagarjuna wrote on his Sunyavada a commentary titled *Akutobhava* (the safe one) in 27 chapters in 400 memorial verses (*karikas*). The doctrine is known as Middle because it declares nothing either positive or negative but merely relative. The

*Akutobhava* begins with the famous 8 negatives which, it is stated, mean the same as the doctrine of causally dependent origination "No passing away and no origination, no destruction and no everlasting continuance, no unity and no multiplicity, no coming and no going I revere the completely Enlightened One, the best of teachers, him who has thus taught the salutary cessation of the world of phenomena", said Nagarjuna

An opponent objected to the above 'If everything is empty and there is neither origination nor passing away, then there can also be no 'four noble truths', no rule of life based on the knowledge of these truths, no fruit of good and evil deeds, no *dharma*, no monastic community and finally no Buddha Were the Middle doctrine to be accepted, then the entire religion would collapse

To this opponent, Nagarjuna's reply was The doctrine of Buddha rests on two truths, one conventional (or relative or conditional) truth and the other transcendental (or absolute) truth Where the meaning of conventional truth remains hidden, the transcendental truth is of the highest order One should know the distinction between these two truths, he who does not understand this distinction, he would not understand the profound substance of the Buddha's doctrine also One follows the transcendental truth when it is based on the truth of everyday life and without its assistance, it is not possible to understand Nirvana Some critics consider this as atheistic Chandrakuti refutes and denies that it is so

Nagarjuna was acknowledged as one of the greatest Buddhist philosophers Huen Tsang called Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Kumarlat as 'the four suns which illumined the world', and Kalhan thought that Nagarjuna was 'the only lord of the land' of Kashmir in the periods of Kings Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka

Nagarjuna, according to Kumarajiva, was born in Berar in a Brahmin family He studied the four *Vedas* and all sciences, including sorcery By his magic he could, when required make himself invisible Once accompanied by three friends, he secretly entered into a royal palace On being found out they were sentenced to death While the other three were executed, Nagarjuna, vowing to become a monk, escaped He studied the *Pitakas* in 90 days and received the Mahayana Sutra

from an aged monk in the Himalayas. He found a commentary on it, zealously propagated Buddhism and directed the religion for a long period. Nagarjuna was well versed in astronomy, medicine and production of precious stones and other worldly things. Bana says that once he received a necklace of pearls from Nagarjuna which served as a remedy for snake-bite and all pains.

Nagarjuna helped spread Buddhism, especially in South India. The famous Nagarjunakonda monasteries, in Andhra Pradesh, where learned pupils and disciples from far off lands came to learn and practise Buddhism, were named after the philosopher Nagarjuna. Inscriptions at Nagarjunakonda mention the fraternity of monks who converted several lands to Buddhism.

Besides the *Akuto bhava*, Nagarjuna also wrote *Yukti-sataka*, *Sunyasaptati*, *Pratīyasamutpadhṛdaya*, *Mahāyāna śāstra*, *Vijñānāśartanī*, *Suhṛallekha*, *Prajñāparamita Sūtra Śāstra* and a treatise on *Pramāṇas*, and reduced the syllogism of five members to one of three. The *Mahāyāna śāstra* taught that from the point of absolute truth there is neither *samsāra* nor *nirvāṇa* and that everything is mere illusion and dream. The *Prajñāparamita Sūtra Śāstra* sets out to prove that true existence (*śūnyatā*) is non existence (*abhāva*). He says, Faith is the entrance to the ocean of the laws of Buddha and knowledge is the ship on which one can sail on it.

Nagarjuna was a very popular name. Besides the philosopher, there are two other famous persons of the same name. One of these was Nagarjuna the alchemist and author of *Rasa Ratnakar*, *Yogasara*, *Yogasataka* etc., and the third Nagarjuna was a famous medical man. Nagarjuna the philosopher outshines the others. His legend still lives in Nagarjunakonda.

Reading

K. Venkataraman *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*

# Kaundinya

## (2nd Century A.D )

**K**aundinya planted Indian culture and civilisation in Funan (Thailand) The story vividly described in Thai history runs briefly as follows

In the olden days Funan had for sovereign a woman named Lion-ye. Once a man named Hoeun-Tien of the country K1 dreamt that God had given him a bow to venture on a junk into the sea. The next morning when he went to the temple, to his pleasant surprise, he found a bow of the very description he had 'seen' in the dream. Equipped with this divine gift, he sailed towards Funan. When he was nearing the coast, the junk was spotted by Lion ye. She led her troops to resist the intruder's entry and to give him a battle, if need arose. But when the man of K1, Hoeun-Tien raised his bow and shot an arrow which killed a man in her boat, she was frightened. She had second thoughts about giving a battle and submitted. Finding that she had nothing on, Hoeun-Tien wrapped her in a piece of cloth and married her.

Hoeun-Tien in the recorded history of Funan (that is Southern Thailand) is a transcription of Kaundinya and K1 that of India. Kaundinya founded a Hindu royal kingdom in Funan in 192 A.D.

The event is corroborated in an inscription of Champa dated 658. It states, "It was there that Kaundinya, the greatest of the Brahmanas, planted the javelin he had received from Asvatthama, son of Drona. There was a daughter of the Naga king whom the great Kaundinya married with due rites." *That is how Kaundinya got both a wife and a kingdom, and established Indian culture in the East.*

The civilising effect in the new land was tremendous. The nation adopted several Hindu customs and practices, leading to a complete assimilation of the two cultures. The followers

f Kaundinya too married local women and settled down in Funan. King Kaundinya's descendants assumed kshatriyahood and took the name Varman and the kingdom flourished for centuries. The island, however, maintained direct relations with India, trade and commerce developed between the two countries and received a boost from their closer relations and cultural affinities.

The contacts proved of immense advantage to both. The empire founded by Kaundinya brought wealth to India by overseas trade and maritime activities conducted from ports in Bengal, Kalinga and the kingdoms of South India. This is testified by frequent voyages of merchants in Gunadhya's stories, inscriptions in Satavahana temples and references in Tamil literature, especially *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai*. Funan and other neighbouring countries too gained from these Indian contacts.

Kaundinya was one of the pioneers who took Indian culture and political and commercial influence to South-East. By establishing an Indian community and developing civilised ways of life, he proved instrumental in preparing the ground for larger Indian migration to Champa, Kamboja, Sri Vijaya and Java. The great Sri Vijaya and other empires of later times had in Kaundinya a precursor who showed the way for advancement not only of political but also commercial interests.

But who this Kaundinya was, wherefrom he came or how he set sail to the East is all shrouded in mystery. However, there can be no doubt about his being a historical figure as diverse sources clearly affirm his role.

# Hala

## (2nd Century A.D.)

**H**ala Sūtavahan's *Sattasati*, also known as *Gāthā Saptasati* is the chief work of love lyrics in Prakrit, the language of the Indian people in the early A D centuries. The book which literally means '700 stanzas' is a rich source of information about the private life of people of India, especially of the pleasures they sought or the sorrows they suffered from love. The life in the rural settings and in nature, various landscapes and seasons is treated deftly by the author with an intimate touch, their tender and sensuous feelings have been frankly and boldly expressed. The heart-throbs of females of different stations and age—old and young, friend, daughter, mother, aunt etc talk about various subjects, the theme, however, invariably turns out to be love whether they talk to young or old, man or woman.

Each of Hala's 700 stanzas is concise and expresses a sentiment whether it is a lament or pleasure from actual life. The expressions sometime come so near the Persian and Urdu love lyrics that if the source be not disclosed, it would be difficult for a reader to distinguish whether he was going through a verse of the *Satī* or reading a *gazel* of a leading Urdu poet, full of imagination and imagery. A few illustrations from Hala will substantiate these observations.

A damsel in love while expressing her feeling of anguish or her longings for the beloved requests the moon to touch her with the same ray-hands with which she had touched her lover's who is tarrying in a distant land.

A young woman says: They say my hard headed husband is going away early in the morning tomorrow. Second Night! please extend yourself so that there may never come the dawn.

The beloved husband has returned but the wife does



not decorate herself for his reception, since she does not like to hurt her unfortunate lady-neighbour, whose lover is still on his sojourn.

'O girl, I caution you, if you meet your lover in the dark, the glitter will betray you, since your heartfelt eyes are sparkling'.

'He looks at her deeply into her face, she is sunk in his vision ; thus looking at each other in great joy. As if they were all alone in the world'.

The angry wife is obliged to smile when her little son with a jerk climbs on the back of her husband who has fallen at her feet. Or a pregnant woman, asked about her health, just casts glances gently at her lover.

Besides these pictures from life, Hala presents pictures from nature also. Hala's similes are brief, yet they have a lasting effect : 'A miser utilises his wealth to the same extent as a wanderer his own shadow'.

Opinions differ as to whether the *Gatha* is a work of Hala or a mere compilation by him. Whatever it may be, the work undoubtedly shows the dexterity and skill of the author compiler.

Hala came from the Satavahana dynasty of kings, seven-teenth in the list, and belongs probably to the middle of the second century A.D. Various recensions of the *Sati* have appeared but none carries more than 430 verses. Even these 430 leave a permanent impression about the poet's merits, including his language. Of the vast mass of Prakrit literature that has been lost to posterity, the *Gatha* is a fine and brilliant sample. A stanza from another Prakrit poet is given below to show that poetic feelings similar to Hala's were relevant even to later times :

Friend ! bring me my beloved,  
Though he has offended me,  
For one has to do with fire,  
Even though it has burnt one's house.

Reading :

B V. Krishnarao : *A History of Early Dynasties of Andhra Pradesh*

# Rudradaman

(2nd Century A D )

The Yavanas, the Sakas, the Pahlavas, the Huns and many other groups of aliens came to India, some as conquerors and others in search of livelihood. But after they were here for a while, they felt free to settle down and were absorbed in the country's body politic. They embraced this country's thinking and living and became one with the local inhabitants, even lost their identity. They adopted Indian customs, manners and names. One of the most prominent from amongst these was Rudradaman I, a Saka, and his Junagarh Inscription (150 A D) in Gujarat is an eloquent testimony of his interest and pride in following the lofty tradition of welfare of mankind set by eminent Indians like Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka.

Rudradaman was the grandson of Mahakshatrapa Chashtana, ruler of Ujjain. It appears that on the death of son Jayaraman in A D 130 his father Chashtana had Rudradaman designated as the heir-apparent. It is probable that the Saka power of Ujjain was shaken at either the close of Chashtana's reign or after his death by Gautmiputra Satakarni and his son Sri Pulumayi. Rudradaman had to fight hard with the Satavahanas whom he ultimately defeated and from whom he recovered the sovereignty of his house. Rudradaman married his daughter to Pulumayi but this relationship did not deter Rudradaman from waging war against his southern relations. Rudradaman also fought with the Yaudheyas and defeated them. But an open hearted king, Rudradaman praised the warlike qualities of his opponent Yaudheyas.

Rudradaman governed a vast territory which extended over Akara (East Malwa-capital Vidisha), Avanti (West Malwa-capital Ujjain), Anupa (capital Mahishmati), Anarta (North Kathiawad), Saurashtra (South Kathiawad), Svabhra (Sabarmati region), Maru (a region in Rajasthan desert), Kutch, Sindhu

(lower portion of Sindh province now in Pakistan), Sauvira (east of lower Indus), Kukura (north Kathiawad), Aparanta (north Konkan capital Suparaka), Nishada (W Vindhya and Aravali) Some of these were conquered by Rudradaman from Satavahanas

In the times of Rudradaman the famous Sudarsana Lake (Girnar) burst its banks The lake had been serving irrigation purposes since the time of Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka, and Rudradaman swayed by the welfare of his subjects had a new dam constructed through his Pahlava Governor Suvishakha Rudradaman was a constitutional monarch and when his ministers refused to incur expenditure on this impossible task bowing to the democratic spirit he incurred the expenses from his own privy purse

Rudradaman had undergone proper training before assuming regal authority He was a very civilised ruler and had taken a vow that he would not kill a man except in battle, a vow he kept all his life He was succeeded by his son Damayada but after Rudradaman the Saka rulers of Ujjain became non-entities

Reading

Ep Indr VIII

## Samudragupta

### (4th Century A D )

**S**amudragupta, fired by the ancient kingly ideal of conquest by war, conquered kingdom after kingdom and for this reason he has been called the 'Indian Napoleon'

Samudragupta was son of Chandragupta and Kumar Devi who came of a Licchhavi family. He was, for his superior qualifications, preferred for the throne by his father to his brothers. A hero of a hundred fights, he was able to make all parts of India acknowledge his paramount sovereignty by a victorious march which continued for two to three years. Some of the kings were killed and their kingdoms annexed, a few were defeated, taken prisoner, then liberated and reinstated as vassals and there were the frontier states which anticipating his conquests offered submission and personal homage to the emperor. Not a ruthless annexationist, but a magnanimous conqueror, he was generous towards a fallen foe. The exploits and glories of his militarism in Dakshinapatha, Aryavarta, Madhyadesa and Eastern India are detailed on a pillar and these are also lauded in a panegyric composed by his poet laureate Harisena.

Samudragupta made himself the master of a wide empire and had no antagonist of equal power. But wider than the sphere of his direct dominion and authority was the sphere of his influence and suzerainty, the range of his international alliance and relations. When he was approached by the king of Ceylon for facilities for building a monastery for Ceylonese pilgrims at Gaya, Samudragupta accommodated his request. He revived the institution of horse sacrifice and his suzerainty was recognised over a wide area extending from Ceylon through the territory of Devaputra and the Sakas of the Punjab, the Sahukushans of Gandhara and the Sahansahis of Kabul right upto the axis.

Much of the history of Samudragupta's career is revealed by the coins he issued. Samudragupta was noted more for his proficiency in the humanities of the times as also for his literary and artistic achievements. He was well versed in the Sanskrit poetry and music. As a king he was kind to his people. In matters of religion he had a catholic attitude. It is inferred from his coins that he was a follower of Vishnu, although in his early life he had come under the influence of Buddhism through its great apostle Vasubandhu.

#### Reading

R. D. Banerji: *Age of Imperial Guptas*

V. A. Smith: *Early History of India*

R. K. Mookerji: *Life and Thought in Ancient India*

# Chandragupta Vikramaditya

## (4-5th Centuries)

Chandragupta had inherited from his father Samudragupta the military genius and completed the task left unfinished by his father. He rounded off the Gupta imperial dominions in northern India partly by pacific overtures such as marriage alliances and partly by conquest. He conciliated the Naga chieftain of the central provinces by accepting the hand of princess Kuber naga and allied with the powerful Varkatakas by giving his daughter Prabhavati in marriage to Rudra Sena II. He defeated the Saka ruler of Gujarat and Kathiawad Rudradaman III and annexed his territories. Thus Chandragupta put to an end the rule of Kshatrapas which had continued for over three hundred years. He also defeated the confederacy of hostile chiefs of Vanga and conquered the Vahlikas (of Balkh) beyond the Hindukush. For giving crushing defeat to the enemies by his cool courage and daring he made himself eligible and assumed the titles of Sahasanka, Srikari and Vikramaditya.

Peace and prosperity reigned supreme in Chandragupta's rule and people led a happy and contented life. About the conditions of the people in his times Fa hien observes

The people are numerous and happy. They have not to register their house holds or attend to any magistrate and their rules. Only those who cultivate the royal land pay a portion of the produce. If they want to go they go if they want to stay on they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishment.

The peace and prosperity rendered possible the progress of culture and civilisation and the brilliant intellectual revival manifested in arts, sciences and literature. The times of the Guptas showed a distinct assertion of Indian nationality and have therefore been called the 'Golden Age' and 'Classical age'.

The art of Chandragupta's times was of a high order and it reflects a national spirit. The architecture of the period has disappeared but the sculpture has survived and it exhibits an unusual beauty of figure, dignity of pose, and restraint and refinement of treatment in detail. He also devised changes in designs in copper and silver coins on which he appears with Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, on one side. Literature, astronomy and astrology also flourished. Chandragupta was a patron of poets and there is a legend that his court was adorned by nine jewels—Dhanwantari, Kshapanak, Amarsingha, Sankar, Vetāl Bhatt, Ghatakarpur, Kalidasa, Varahamihira and Varuruchi. But this looks more unlikely as some of these celebrities belong to a later period, only Kalidasa, the greatest poet dramatist being Chandragupta's contemporary. Vivid descriptions of Ujjain, to which Chandragupta had shifted his capital, figure in Kalidasa's works. Sanskrit again gained popularity and became the language of the court as also of the learned people. For his devotion to the cult of Vishnu, he was called Param-Bhagawat.

Chandragupta's name is associated with a romantic episode not substantiated by history. Samudragupta, it states, was succeeded by his son Ramagupta, one of the many princes and princesses. In the course of war with the Saka king, Ramagupta was so closely besieged that in order to save his people he agreed to surrender his queen Dhruva Devi. His younger brother Chandragupta protested against this act of dishonour and went himself in disguise as the queen to the enemy's camp where by a stratagem he killed the Saka king and saved the honour of the empire. The story says that Chandragupta after some time succeeded in seizing power and killed Ramagupta and married Dhruva Devi.

He was named Chandragupta II after his grandfather and ruled from 380 to 413 A.D.

Chandragupta left to his son a well knit empire. "Samudragupta, the hero of a hundred fights, is a hero of history, Chandragupta II who brought to maturity the new era of political greatness and cultural regeneration, won a place in the hearts of the people."

#### Reading

R. C. Majumdar *The Classical Age*

R. C. Majumdar *The Gupta Empire*

# Kalidasa

## (4-5th Centuries)

Upama Kalidasya'

*There is none to compare with Kalidasa in the use of similes*

Beside their renown for the use of similes, the works of Kalidasa are 'perfect and polished and free from extravagance', and he is 'the finest master of Indian poetic style'. Kalidasa's command over language, the exuberance of his imagination, the delicacy of his tenderness, the versatility of his description, the harmonious flow of his expression, the peculiar capacity of delineating universal truth—all these combine to raise Kalidasa to the highest pitch of glory'

In such high esteem has Kalidasa been held by the poets and scholars, Indian as well as foreign. His works include poems and plays. His well known poems are *Raghunansom*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Meghadut* and *Ritusamhara* and plays include the *Sakuntalam*, *Vikramorvasijam* and *Malavikagnitram*.

The *Ritusamhara* is a youthful work in simple style. In it the poet exhibits delicate observation and loving sympathy with nature and describes the relations of the diverse moods of the year to the love of man and maiden or husband and wife.

The *Meghadut* is a mature work. It weaves a romantic story through a Yaksha who has been banished to Ramagiri for a year for failure of duty by his master Siva. The approach of the rainy season reminds him of his beloved in Alaka and he begs of a passing cloud to take to his beloved the news of his welfare and the assurances of his devotion. The cloud is bidden to proceed in the company of cranes and royal swans bound for the Manasarovar. 'On the way it will pass various places and at one of these it will see the Yakshini sorrowful, blighted by separation and emaciated. The cloud may awaken



her gently from slumber and give her his message of tender love and an assurance of his faith and the certainty of reunion.' The description of the cloud's progress is brilliant and the wife's picture sorrowful and full of pathos. The *Meghadut* has brevity of expression, richness of content and power to elicit sentiment.

The *Kumarasambhavam* is an even more mature poem. It has richer variety, brilliance of fancy, and greater warmth of feeling. Its canvas varies from 'the loveliness of the spring and the delights of married love to the utter desolation induced by the death of the beloved.' The poem begins with a superb description of the Himalayas, of Siva in meditation and Uma and maidens waiting on him. Kamadeva tries to intervene and win Siva's heart for Uma but he is reduced to ashes by Siva's glance and Rati laments for her dead husband. To test Uma's depth, Siva appears as a hermit and on finding her feelings weds her. Kumara, born of Siva and Parvati, kills the demon Taraka and relieves the world of the terror. Since parts of the work are not as brilliant as others, some critics have concluded that a few *sargas* are not the poet's but were added later on.

The *Raghuansam* has been claimed by some to be the first Indian Mahakavya. The central figure is Rama. In the beginning the history of the Ikshvakus has been traced.

Kalidasa is the greatest dramatist. His *Sakuntlam* is the best representative and of it the 4th canto is the best. It narrates the story of love of Dushyanta and Sakuntala through its many vicissitudes. Although he borrowed the plot from the Mahabharata parts of it are quite original. Sakuntala's departure from the *ashram* to her husband's abode is full of grief, but mixed with pathos and tenderness. Her attachment to everything in the *ashram*, including trees, plants, animals and inmates, and Kanva's sorrow are touchingly portrayed. Her exemplary self-control on seeing Dushyanta is graceful. Of Sakuntala Goethe wrote :

Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline,

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed ?

Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine ?

I name thee 'O Sakuntala !' and all at once is said.

The *Vikramorviśyam* deals with the love of Pururvas with the celestial nymph Urvashi. Wilson observes, "Trivial as the incidents may appear, unimportant as may be the love of the hero and the heroine, both persons and events are subject to an unlawful control, whose interference invests them with a dignity superior to their natural level."

The *Malavikāgnimitram* describes the loves of the king Agnimitra and Malavika, an attendant of the king. Later it is found that she was by birth a Ceylonese princess.

With poetry or play, perfection seems to be the main characteristic of most of Kalidasa's works. 'Kalidasa is an epitome of the age of poetic perfection in India. His poems are free from verbal jugglery and enigmatic conceits. His poems are standards of poetic perfection and natural melody.'

A number of anecdotes are known about Kalidasa. As an adolescent he was extremely stupid and won skill in poetry with the grace of goddess Kali and that is how he came to be known as Kalidasa, the servant of Kali. Kalidasa was well acquainted with the Indian scene. How else can we explain his description of the sandal of Kashmir, the pearl fisheries of the Tamraparni in the south of Tamilnadu, the deodars of the Himalayas, the betel and coconut palms of Kalinga, the sand of Indus. Tradition connects him with Chandragupta Vikramaditya. The titles of his works viz *Vikramorviśyam* (connected with Vikrama) and *Kumarasambhavam* (with Kumara perhaps named after Kumaragupta, the heir apparent) and his affection for Ujjain are all pointers to this possibility.

An interesting piece from *Sakuntalam* is given below.

My child when you have entered your husband's home

Obeys your elders and be very kind

To rivals never be perversely blind

And angry with your husband, even though he

Should prove less faithful than a man might be

Be courteous to servants as you may

Not puffed with pride in this your happy day

Thus does a maiden grow into a wife

But self-willed women are the curse of life

(*Sakuntalam*)

# Aryabhata

(476-499)

The earth is round and it rotates about its axis, these revolutionary theories were propounded by the Indian astronomer Aryabhata in the fifth century. He also for the first time assigned scientific causes of eclipse for which he has rightly been called the father of epicyclic astronomy.

Aryabhata was born in 476 A.D. at Kusumapura, as Patna was then known. At the age of 23 in the 3600th year of the Kaliyuga he wrote *Aryabhatiyam*, one of the most famous treatises on astronomy. In it he systematised the extant knowledge of astronomy and mathematics. He says, "I delved deep in the astronomical theories, true and false, and rescued the precious sunken jewel of the knowledge by means of the best of my intellect and by the grace of God."

The *Aryabhatiyam* is a small work. It consists of 121 slokas—3 forming the introduction and conclusions, 10 in Geetika metre and known as Dasgeetika and 108 in Aryavrata metre and known as Aryashtasatam. The last section comprises of three divisions, i.e., *Ganita*, *Kala-kriya* and *Gole*. The *Ganita* (mathematics) deals with the methods of determining square and cube roots, geometrical problems, the progression, problems involving quadratic equations and indeterminate equations of the first degree. But most of this is reproduction of the known knowledge. Nevertheless his contribution lies in respect of his value of  $\pi$ , sine tables and method of solving indeterminate equations of the first degree.

Aryabhata for the first time gave the approximate value of  $\pi$  in the form that the circumference of a circle with a diameter of 20000 is 62832. As for the concept of 'sine', Srinivasiengar is of the view that it is the degenerated form of *Jya* (bow string). An alternate word for *Jya* is *jna* which in Arabic becomes *jiba* and then *Jaib* which means heart.

Later at the hands of Romans the words got interchanged, *Jya* becoming 'sine' (heart).

In the chapter on 'Gole' Aryabhata defines all the circles given in the armillary sphere together with the small circles representing the diurnal motion of the sun. He was the first astronomer to mention that the diurnal motion of the heavens is due to the rotation of the earth about its axis. But, for holding the view, he was severely criticised by Brahmagupta, an astronomer of later times.

Aryabhata's achievements in algebraic analysis and spherical geometry are also remarkable. But perhaps his most important contribution to mathematics is his solution of the indeterminate equation  $ax-by=c$ .

Aryabhata's name spread and disciples flocked to him from far off places. Pupils came from the distant Kerala and some think that Aryabhata was himself a Keralite because his tradition is still in vogue there. A galaxy of scholars were from his school, such as Bhaskara I, Sankaranarayana, Surya-deva, Nilkantha.

#### Reading

- Baldeva Mishra *Aryabhatiyam with Sanskrit commentary and Hindi Vjakhya*  
 L V Gujjar *Ancient Indian Mathematics and Veda*  
 C N Srinivasengar *The History of Ancient Indian Mathematics*  
 B B Dutta and A N Singh *History of Hindu Mathematics*

# Tiruvalluvar

(5th Century)

*Tiruvalluvar—'The Bard of the Universal Man'*

Be pure in mind for that true virtue is,  
All else is merely sound and sham  
If homely worth be lacking in the wife,

Whatever worth there be, no home-life can there be  
The mule is sweet, the lute is sweet  
Say those who 've never heard  
The pretty prattle of their little ones  
The soul that's made by free will heal again  
Not so the wound by the tongue that is made

The above samples from Valluvar's *Kural* which is one of the greatest Tamil classic are illustrative of the genius of the poet. The *Kural* contains on the one hand profound thoughts on the most baffling problems of existence, and on the other it has an astounding economy of words and finish of style.

The *Kural* is highly ethical in its approach. It deals with virtue, wealth and sex but not with *moksha*. Love in the *Kural* is an exalting, pervading, transforming passion, not a mere cult of the body. He shows a keen sensitiveness to the beauty of a woman as seen through a lover's eyes, and has a gift to make a genuine beauty blossom into fulness.

The *Kural* was the result of the ripe experience of a man whose heart was pure and brain unclouded and who, though open to external sources, looked into himself for the ultimate expression of the wisdom that made him 'Bard of the Universal man'. In view of his thought and expression, Tiruvalluvar has been called the Solomon of Tamil literature.

The *Kural*, though a vivid portrait of magnanimity and goodness in itself, is a little impracticable for the man of the work-a-day world but it does not allow itself to be forgotten.

Valluvar does not partition humanity into four *varnas*,

nor does he recognise the greatness of any one caste. Women are accorded a dignified place in society—she is man's helpmate, not his subordinate. Valluvar had a wonderful understanding of the world and such is his universal appeal that every sect claims him as its own. Not only Vaishnavites and Saivites but even Jains, Buddhists and Christians are attracted by him.

Almost nothing is known about the man himself, not even his name ; for Valluvar is the name of a depressed community from which he is supposed to have come and *Tiru* means saintly or worshipful. But the *Kural* reveals the author ; the style is the man.

#### Reading

Jesudasan *History of Tamil Literature*

Hooper *Hymns of the Alvars*

# Varahamihira

(499-587)

Calendars should be periodically corrected by taking into account the accumulated precession, this advice was tendered by Varahamihira. He himself had prepared a corrected version of the Indian calendar after taking into account the amount of precession that had accumulated since the preparation of the *Surya Siddhanta*. He expressed his views on astronomy and astrology in the *Panch Siddhanta*.

The *Panch Siddhanta* is a historical document of great importance. In it he changed the content and methods and updated his astronomy, the substance of Aryabhata's doctrines. He expounded the astronomical doctrines contained in the five treatises after the names of Paulisa, Romaka, Vasishtha, Soura, and Brahma, but he considered the Soura as the only correct system.

Regarding the shape and position of the earth, Varahamihira said, "All things which are perceived by the senses are witness in favour of the globular shape of the earth and refute the possibility of its having another shape."

"Mountains, rivers, trees, cities, men and angels are around the globe of the earth. And if Yamakoti and Rum are opposite to each other, one could not say that one is 'low' in relation to the other, because 'low' does not exist. No place is low to other, it is in every particular identical with another place on the earth and one place could as little 'fall' as any other. Everyone speaks of himself with regard to his ownself, 'I am above and the others are below whilst all of them are around the globe like the blossom springing on the branches of a *Kadamba* tree. They encircle it on all sides, but each individual blossom has the same position as the other, neither they are standing downward nor the others standing upright. For the earth attracts that which is upon her, as it is 'below'."

towards all directions ”

Varahamihira considered earth as an immovable sphere fixed at the centre of the universe, around which the sun, the moon and other planets revolved. If the earth had motion, he wrote, “A bird would not return to its nest as soon as it had flown away from it towards west ” This was contrary to the views earlier put forward by Aryabhata that the earth moved.

Varahamihira's work reveals that the correction known as precession of equinoxes was known in his time and a fairly accurate value was available. He was also responsible for introducing ‘word numerals’ whereby certain numerals are denoted by certain words e.g., sun=12, eyes=2, Agni (fire)=3, Vedas=4, Bana=5, Samudra (sea)=7, Karī (elephant)=8, Rudra=11, Raja=16 etc. These numbers are based on Indian mythology.

Varahamihira wrote two other books viz *Bṛhatjataka* and *Bṛhat Samhita*. The former work consists of 25 chapters and deals with horoscopic astrology. The *Bṛhat Samhita* contains 40000 couplets. Parts of it deal with journeys and weddings. The two works also include the astronomical topics relating to the determination of time and planetary position and eclipses.

In his *Samhita* the influence of Greek astronomy is visible, and for the Greek scholarship he had a high regard. He had said, “The Greeks though impure must be honoured since they were trained in sciences and they excelled others ”

Varahamihira was the son of Aditya Das of Kapiththaka. He was born in 499 and died in 587.

#### Reading

*Bṛhat Samhita* (translated by V. Subramanya Sastri & M. Ramakrishna Bhatt)



# vatsyayana

(6th Century)

Underlying the whole Indian criticism is one fundamental idea—that sexuality is intrinsically divine, and that the sexual afflatus in man and animals is the sensible presence of creative divinity.

What is the aim of man's life ? Dharma (Duty) ? Artha (Wealth) ? Kama (Love) ? Moksha (Salvation) ? Is the aim of man's life to abide by the duties, or earn wealth, or make love, or attain salvation ? None of these individually but all of them collectively—that is the Hindu view of life summarized by Vatsyayana. Unlike the modern man, the ancient Hindu did not suffer from sex obsession and gave sex a prominent place, but this was done without losing balance—wealth and duty were given equal importance. Further the objects should be ordained at appropriate phases. Artha (wealth) should be earned in youth, Kama indulged into after maturity and efforts for Dharma and Moksha to be resorted to in subsequent stages. Yet conscious of the duration of man's life, Vatsyayana took a flexible view and did not consider this order as unalterable—a man could pursue the four aims as and when an opportunity came his way. He also asserted that sexual satisfaction was essential for the upkeep of bodily health.

Vatsyayana systematised the knowledge of love in his *Kama Sūtras*. He deals in it with love and sex objectively for the benefit of Nagarik, the man of tastes, and assures that the study of the Sūtras will moderate and refine the citizen's tastes and induce him not to forget the other sides of man's activity.

*Kama Sūtras* is an encyclopedia of erotics and discusses every possible aspect of love relationship. It contains essential knowledge for making of love a rewarding art and describes in 1250 *ślokas* the human sexual types such as Nagaraks, friends, go-between, temperaments and seasons, the characteris-

tics of women of different parts of India, modes of love, different parts of body in which the women are sensitive to erotic stimulation at successive stages of the lunar cycle, the range of possible embraces, kisses and love scratches, blow and bites, postures of sexual intercourse, how to woo a new bride or stranger, relations with maidens, married women, hetaira, hints for courtship, marriage, ceremonies, folk recipes, spells for remedying various defects, potions, aphrodisiacs etc

Explaining the reasons that impelled him to write the work, *Kama Sutra*, Vatsyayana says "Thus have I written in a few words the 'service of love' after reading the texts of ancient authors and following the ways of enjoyment mentioned in them. He who is acquainted with the true principles of this science pays regard to Dharma, as well as to the teachings of others and does not act sharply to the dictates of his own desire. The *Kama Sutra* was composed according to the precepts of the scriptures, for the benefit of the world, by Vatsyayana while leading the life of a religious student and wholly engaged in contemplation of the Deity. The work is not intended to be used merely as an instrument for satisfying carnal desires. A person acquainted with the true principles of this science and who preserves his *dharma*, *artha* and *Kama* and who has regard for other people is sure to obtain mastery over his senses. In short an intelligent and prudent person attending to *dharma*, *artha* and *Kama* also without becoming the slave of his passions obtains success in everything that he may undertake."

The *Kama Sutra* had tremendous influence on poets and writers. Magha, Bhavabhuti, Bharavi and others made use of the information contained in *Sutra*s in their descriptions of love. The *Sutra*s also give information about the prevalent practices and customs. But they had a different purpose also. Vatsyayana conceded that all is fair in love and he even gives instructions in modes of deceiving maidens and seducing others' wives. It is certainly difficult to justify this easily with the essence of the philosophy he enunciated.

It is difficult to give actual date of the treatise as also its author's period. Scholars place him somewhere in the period beginning from the of the 1st century to the end of the 6th century. We, however, know that Vatsyayana was a native

of South India, that Mallinaga was his other name and that he was the author of another work '*Njaya Bhashya*'. Perhaps Vatsyayana was his family name

✓ Prior to Vatsyayana there had existed works on erotics. But these were esoteric or obscure. Vatsyayana found, for instance, the work of Panchal Babravya difficult to be understood by the common man and therefore, wrote the *Kama Sutras* in a succinct style.

#### Reading

S C Upadhyaya *Vatsyayana's Kama Sutras*

Philip Rawson *Erotic Art of the East*

# Mahendravarman I

(5-6th Centuries)

“This is the temple caused to be constructed by Vichitrachitta for Brahma, Isvara and Vishnu without brick, without timber, without metals and without mortar’ This inscription in the Mandagappattu cave, the first cave temple in Tamilnadu, refers to the unique architecture evolved by Vichitrachitta which was the title of Mahendravarman I of the Pallava dynasty

Mahendravarman introduced in Tamilnadu the art of excavating beautiful shrines out of solid and hard granite rocks and embellishing these with paintings He carved a number of caves scattered all over his kingdom from Pallavaram down to Padukkottai, including the Adivaraha cave (at Mahabalipuram) which laid the foundation of ‘the grandeur and reputation of Mahabalipuram’ Thus from Mahendravarman begins the history of Hindu architecture in Tamilnadu and some even call Mahabalipuram the birth place of South Indian architecture and sculpture

Mahendravarman’s inscriptions of the rock cut temples at Tiruchirapalli, Sittanavasal and Pallavaram and also in the ruined *Mandap* in the Ekambaresvara temple at Kanchipuram furnish a large number of *virudas* He built a Vaishnava cave at Mahendravadi and Adivaraha cave at Mahabalipuram In the latter he figures with his two queens The Dharmaraja and Kotikal temples too bear resemblance to his architecture and perhaps owe their origin to him The new style of stone building evolved by Mahendravarman produced wonderful specimens in times to come

The musical inscription at Kudumiyamalai is also attributed to Mahendravarman For these interests and activities in arts and aesthetics, Mahendravarman I was also known as Chattakari, that is ‘builder of temples’ His son Narasimhavarman I too kept his father’s interests alive He built cave

temples, *rathas* (chariots) in stone, and rock sculpture at Mahabalipuram

Mahendravarman was the grandson of Simhavarma and the son of Simhavishnu, who had wrested territories from the Cholas and carved out a kingdom. For long the southern frontiers of the Pallavas remained undisturbed from the neighbouring Cholas and Pandyas. But on the northern boundaries a war was fought between Mahendravarman and Pulakeshin I when the latter attacked the Pallava territories in 610. According to the Kasakudi Plates Mahendravarman annihilated his enemies at Pallalura.

Mahendravarman was a liberal king. For sometime he followed the Jain religion but was later converted to Saivism. Yet he showed liberality towards Vaishnavism and was never hostile to other religions. He ruled from 600 to 630.

With Mahendravarman's name is associated one of the rarest coincidences of history. Two renowned and powerful kings of the same name, Mahendravarman, ruled contemporaneously and have left indelible marks on history. The distinct feature between the two is their family names: one was a Pallava of South India and the other known as Chitrakuta, of Indo-China. Yet the major distinguishing mark should be the contribution of the former to cave-art, specially at Mahabalipuram.

#### Reading

Henry Heras *Studies in Pallava History*

Krishnaswami Aiyangar *Ancient India and South Indian History & Culture Vol. I*

# Harsha

(C 590-647)

When the Gupta empire which had ushered in the golden period in the country's history, broke, a number of small states rose and their mutual dissension invited the marauder Huns to invade the country. It was at this time that Harsha the king of Kanauj waged wars of vengeance against the aliens and by the strong arm of his authority recovered the political unity of the country which was lost in local conflicts. And when he completed this task he put an end to all wars, devoted himself to the tasks of peace, the promotion of the material and moral interests and development of the country's cultural individuality and greatness.

Harsha was the son of king Prabhakarvardhana of Sthanuvara and the younger brother of Rajyavardhana. Prabhakar was a powerful king and made his power felt. He sent crown prince Rajyavardhana to drive away the Huns. But in the meantime the king passed away. When the prince returned he was distressed at his father's death. But at that very time what added to his grief was the heart-rending news that his brother-in-law had been murdered by the king of Malwa and that his sister Rajyashri was being kept in fetters at Kanyakubja. Rajyavardhana led his army against the king of Malwa and succeeded in routing his army. Unfortunately he was led into a trap and murdered by Sasanka the king of Gaud. These deaths and their distress shattered Harsha. He found that a war of vengeance had been forced on him.

The king and crown prince having been killed, Harsha was next in the line of succession. The council of ministers called Harsha to the vacant throne and advised him not only to chastise the Gaud king but also to take steps to end the system of petty warring states in the country which only bred treachery and trouble. Harsha started on a war of conquest on all four

sides. Hardly had he moved when he heard that Rajashri had escaped into the wild of the Vindhya. With the help of the forest chiefs and a Buddhist monk named Dissakramana, Harsha succeeded in tracing out his sister. When they reached her she was about to leap into the flames to sacrifice herself as a *sati*.

Harsha was determined to carry out his plan of conquests. The first thing he attended to was the safety of his sister. Thereafter, he embarked upon conquests. The course of his conquests ran smooth in all directions till it was checked at the Vindhya and the Reva by the southern sovereign Pulakeshin II. Harsha turned back content with his suzerainty in the north, he put his army on a peace-footing that is to say that the force had been so strengthened that insubordination from any quarters was an impossibility. The peace strength included as many as 60,000 elephants and 1,00,000 horses, according to Ywan Chwang, the Chinese pilgrim. Harsha was well acquainted with the various parts of his empire which he frequently visited. His administration was efficient and the material and moral progress of the people quite notable.

With peace and order thus enforced, Harsha was able to devote himself to the pursuit of culture and learning. He is said to have written three plays Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda. He was also a great patron of learning. He patronised Bana, the author of Harshacharita and Kadambari, Haridatta, Jayasen, and the Chinese pilgrim Ywan Chwang whom he treated with almost royal honours. He gave one-fourth of the revenue from the crown lands as reward for intellectual eminence and another one-fourth for helping the various sects. Besides he also provided liberally for works of public utility.

Instead of military displays and pageants, Harsha engaged himself in solemn pomp and grand processions of religion. Although his ancestors were worshippers of the Tantric cult, Siva and the Sun, he adopted, under the teachings of Ywan Chwang, Mahayana Buddhism and for its promotion he convoked a grand religious assembly at Kanauj to which were invited the exponents of different religions. The assembly went on smoothly excepting that a minor conspiracy was hatched by Brahmins either to take Harsha's life or Ywan Chwang's.

The designs of the conspirators were miscarried and the Brahmans were as a punishment deported to the frontiers of India

Harsha served the cause of Buddhism in other ways too. Once a year he used to summon and entertain Buddhist monks for 21 days. He also endowed Buddhists with many buildings and monasteries at different places. He forbade the use of animal food and destruction of animal life. Kanauj in Harsha's time became a great centre of Buddhism.

Yet Harsha was not hostile towards other faiths and communities and nor were these excluded from the royal patronage. Every five years he held an assembly, called the Assembly of Moksha at which he would give away almost everything except the material of war, and beg of his sister, Rajyashri for an ordinary second hand garment. And after receiving it he would put it on and pray—'worship to the Buddhas of the ten regions'. *This was a record in charity which no king of his age or clime has possibly equalled.*

Reading

R. S. Tripathi *History of Kanauj*



## Bana

(7th Century)

Bana, or Banabhatta to give his complete name, was a court-poet and a great writer of romantic prose which he considered no way inferior to verse and asserted that 'versification' is a superfluous ornament on poetry and that real poetry may be written in prose as well as in verse. There is no doubt that his works, the *Harshacharita* and the *Kadambari*, merit the description of poetry.

Bana was born of Chitrabhanu and Rajadevi at Prithukuta on the banks of the Sone in Bihar. While he was just a child he lost his mother and was brought up by his father Chitrabhanu. Bana showed deep interest in Sanskrit and acquired a fair knowledge of it. And when he was not yet 15 another tragedy befell—his father died. This changed the course of his life. From learning he deviated to vagrancy; instead of abiding by discipline he turned obstinate and disobedient. He fell into bad company and went about travelling. The wreckless spirit brought young Bana much infamy. But the wanderlust added to the richness of his experience, imagination and knowledge of ways of the world. These he later fruitfully utilized in his descriptions.

Wide travels enlarged the number of his acquaintances, and the acquaintances often turned into friends. In time he developed a wide circle, ranging from princes to paupers. He had impressed prince Krishna, brother of Harsha, by his youthfulness and the prince introduced the young man to the king. Bana grasped the opportunity. Turning inward he repented his past conduct and started a new and righteous life. In time he found the king's favour and Bana grew to be a friend and confidant of the king. Of Harsha's patronage Bana spoke in grateful praise.

Harsha's favour also roused the muse lying dormant in

Bana and for the subject and the theme he took the king's life. The *Harshacharita* was the result. It brought him recognition and confidence. The *Harshacharita* is a mixture of poetry and history. It contains exquisite expressions, unusual play on words, including puns, rich sentiments, vivid descriptions of human situations and of nature. Bana is a master in describing personalities. He has wit, his pictures and similes are poetically fashioned without being artificial. His language is elegant. The *Harshacharita* is a rich source for information about customs, religious conditions, sects, rites, astrology, omens, protective means for the king, and the court life. Here is an example of his descriptive talent.

A prince having no pride, a Brahmin not seeking any gain, a sage who does not get angry, a monkey that is not unsteady, a poet who has no jealousy, a trader who is not a thief, a husband who is not vindictive, a nobleman who is not poor, a wealthy person who is not wicked, a niggard who is not a thorn on one's side, a hunter who is not ferocious, a Parasharya monk who may be a pious Brahmin, a servant who is happy, a gambler who is grateful, a mendicant who is not ravenous, a slave who gives friendly advice, a minister who speaks the truth, a king's son who is not discourteous. (It would be rare to find)

Bana next thought of another work that might fetch him everlasting fame. The result of this redoubled vigour was the *Kadambari* which remains even today an admirable monument of literary art. It describes love and quiet in contrast to the pathos that marked the *Harshacharita*. It is said that before Bana could complete the *Kadambari*, he passed away. The work was completed by his son.

The plot of the *Kadambari* is quite ingenious and Bana handled it with deftness. Its development and characterisation are consistent and the narrative is realistic and masterly. Bana's observation is keen and delineation life-like. He possessed the power of describing the inexpressible and dealt so with the delicate shades of grief, fear, joy, and courage. He deals with love in a natural way. Bana's genius is realistic and he gave prose shape and colour.

Bana has been criticised for being artificial in his writings, for his style being ornate and redundant, learned but extra-

vagant, charming but laborious. Some say that his puns are farfetched, similes too many and too often used. The panegyric description of Bana's first sight of Harsha is conveyed in one sentence only but that covers ten pages. It appears that Bana makes conscious search for double meaning for obscure words and overloads single words with long epithets which mar his poetic art.

These shortcomings no doubt exist, but considering the period he wrote in, he is one of the greatest prose-writers of India. Here is a specimen of his prose which gives a glimpse of his quality.

Beware of Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth), my son !  
 She is fickle and her ways are but little understood. When acquired she is hard to keep. Even though held fast by the cords of heroism, she escapes. Though guarded by elephants, she flees away. She does not regard race, she does not follow the fortune of a family, does not consider character, does not count intelligence, does not court righteousness, does not honour generosity. She has no use for sacred learning, she does not understand truth, she does not value discrimination. Like the hazy outline of an aerial city, she vanishes as soon as we look upon her. She dwells on the edge of sword, as if perpetually engaged in learning cruelty. Like a creeper, she is a parasite, like a river, she is full of bubbles, like the sun's rays on a cloudy day, she rests now on one thing and now on another. She regards the virtuous as impure, she despises the lofty as unpropitious, she looks upon the gentle as worthless. She avoids a hero like a thorn, leaps over a courteous man as if he were a snake, shuns the giver of charities as a nightmare. She keeps away from the temperate and mocks at the wise. Her ways are full of jugglery and contradiction. Though creating a fever she also produces a chill, though rising from water she increases thirst, though of earthly mould she is invisible, though attached to the highest, she really loves only the base. For the poisonous weeds of desire she is like a fostering shower, for the deer of the senses, she is like a hunter's alluring song, for the picture of virtue she is like a polluting cloud of smoke.

Reading

Hazari Prasad Dwivedi *Banabhatta ki Atmakatha (Hindi)*

# ahmagupta

(598-668)

**I**t was Brahmagupta who for the first time used algebra to solve astronomical problems. He also made several other important inventions. To name a few: concept of zero, method of solving indeterminate equations of the second degree, rules of solving simple and quadratic equations of various types.

Brahmagupta was born the son of Jishnu at Bhilamala near Multan in 598. He wrote *Brahma Sphuta Siddhanta*, a work of great historical importance, in 628 under the patronage of king Vyaghramukha of Saka dynasty. It is a compendium of astronomy, over four chapters of it are devoted to pure mathematics. Its twelfth chapter is devoted to Ganita (including geometry) and eighteenth chapter to *Kuttaka* (algebra but literally meaning pulverizer).

Brahmagupta gave his principles of astronomical systems and compared those with the view of earlier mathematicians. He dealt with 20 arithmetical operations and 8 determinations. He also gave methods for calculations of the motions and places of various planets, their rising and setting conjunctions, calculation of eclipses of the sun and the moon etc.

Brahmagupta criticized the Puranic view that the earth was flat or hollow like a bowl and observed that the earth as well as heaven was round. But he was wrong in agreeing with Varahamihira that the earth did not move. His views about the causes of eclipse too were incorrect. He was not strong in geometry and his value of the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter as square root of 10 was less accurate than Aryabhata's.

It was the *Brahma Sphuta Siddhanta* through which the Arabs became conversant with Indian astronomy. The system was explained by Kanka of Ujjain to Khalifa Abbas el Mansoor of Baghdad who got it translated by Al Fazari. The

Smiles, sentiment, shame, fear, glances,  
 Averted, half turned towards us and side long looks  
 Loving words, jealousy, disputes and play, all these  
 Are the weapons by which woman wins over us

Remembered she will bring remorse,  
 Seen she makes the mind unclear,  
 Touched she nearly drives one mad,  
 Why call such a creature dear ?

What is the quest of sights ?  
 The face of a satisfied girl,  
 The best of odours ?  
 Her breath of sounds ? Her voice  
 The best of tastes ? Her lips  
 Of contacts ? Her body  
 The best of thoughts ? Her beauty  
 She entrances every sense  
 Is there a heart that girls cannot subdue  
 When they walk like swans, their bangles jingling,  
 Their girdles tinkling their anklets jangling,  
 And their eyes like those of deer  
 Glance frank but timid

### About peace

The earth as the bed the arm as the pillow  
 The sky as the canopy the zephyr the favourable  
 breeze  
 Renunciating the wife the moon the blazing lamp  
 A hermit sleeps in comfort like a king possessing  
 great wealth  
 Earth, thou art my mother the atmosphere the  
 father  
 And thou fire my friend the water my relations  
 And my brother the ether I address you with  
 folded hands  
 The merit that I attained in your company  
 When I was living below on earth  
 With the brilliant knowledge  
 That I gained as a consequence thereof  
 Now I got to the other world  
 Abandoning your all  
 Love brother and friend, love well father and  
 mother

# Bhartrihari

(7th Century)

**B**hartrihari is the author of the famous three *Satakas* on *Sringar* (love), *Vairagya* (indifference to things of the sense) and *Niti* (wise conduct). 'Sataka' literally means one hundred and the title 'Sataka' is indicative of the verses running into one hundred in each of the three works, obviously small in size. Yet these lyrical and gnomic verses are very popular and are frequently used, to make a point to suit occasions to the learned and the lay alike.

The *Satakas* lay down maxims on the path of wisdom, from sexual pleasure to virtue and performance of duty to the highest goal, the renunciation of the world.

The *Sringar Sataka* opens with pictures of the beauty of woman and the passion of love as it varies with the changing seasons of the year and the joys of its function. Next, the joys of dalliance are contrasted with the abiding peace attained by penance and wisdom. In conclusion it is observed that beauty is a delusion and a snare, a woman is sweet but snake-like poisonous in man's way of life, love leads only to worldly attachment, and that the true end of man lies in renunciation of the world and in God.

He speaks thus about women

O wandering heart  
Stray not in the forest of woman's fair body  
Nor in the steeples which are her breasts  
For there lurks love, the highwayman

When we see not our loved one,  
We are content to long to gaze upon her,  
Seen, our aim then is joy of close embraces,  
Embraced, our one prayer is that her body  
And our own may be made one

Smiles, sentiment, shame, fear, glances  
 Averted, half turned towards us and side long looks  
 Loving words, jealousy, disputes and play, all these  
 Are the weapons by which woman wins over us

Remembered she will bring remorse,  
 Seen she makes the mind unclear,  
 Touched she nearly drives one mad,  
 Why call such a creature dear ?

What is the quest of sights ?  
 The face of a satisfied girl,  
 The best of odours ?  
 Her breath of sounds ? Her voice  
 The best of tastes ? Her lips  
 Of contacts ? Her body  
 The best of thoughts ? Her beauty  
 She entrances every sense  
 Is there a heart that girls cannot subdue  
 When they walk like swans their bangles jingling  
 Their girdles tinkling their anklets jangling,  
 And their eyes like those of deer  
 Glance frank but timid

### About peace

The earth as the bed the arm as the pillow  
 The sky as the canopy the zephyr the favourable  
 breeze  
 Renunciating the wife the moon the blazing lamp  
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 When I was living below on earth  
 With the brilliant knowledge  
 That I gained as a consequence thereof  
 Now I got to the other world  
 Abandoning your all  
 Love brother and friend love well father and  
 mother

The beauty of Bhartrihari's poetry is that each of his stanzas expresses one idea in a complete and daintily finished form. An instance is given here

For a moment man is a boy, for a moment  
a lovesick youth, for a moment bereft of wealth,  
for a moment in the height of prosperity, then at  
life's end with limbs worn out by old age and  
wrinkles adorning his face, like an actor he retires  
behind the curtain of death

Besides poetry, Bhartrihari's name is associated with grammar and philosophy, and authorship of the *Vakyapadiya Mahabhashya Tika*, the *Sabda Dhatu Samiksha* and the *Bhatti Kavya*. The *Vakyapadiya* is a learned work on philosophy of grammar. Because of the different subject matters they deal with as also their varying styles, opinions differ about their author whether it was one person or there were two persons of the name of Bhartrihari who composed them.

Bhartrihari's name is associated with several legends. He is said to have been a king. A second makes him a brother of the legendary king Vikramaditya of Ujjain, and yet a third says he was a courtier. It is argued that only one associated closely with the court could present such vivid descriptions of the court life. Yet Harihara in his *Bhartrihari Niveda* presents him as a disciple of Gorakhanath.

In his youth Bhartrihari was perhaps a worshipper of Siva, who according to the poet, is the perfect presentation of final reality. But in old age Bhartrihari either became a Buddhist or a Sanyasin. I tsing, the Chinese pilgrim, says that Bhartrihari wandered between the monastic and lay life. Seven times he moved between the cloister and the world for which he reproached himself. On one occasion while entering the monastery, he even had a student to wait outside with a chariot so that, if worldly longings overcame his resolution, he might depart. Finally, in the Buddhist way he counselled freedom from desire and resignation. There are caves at Chunargarh, near Varanasi, and one at Ujjain named after Bhartrihari.

There is a controversy about the period of Bhartrihari. Some basing their opinion on I tsing place him in the seventh century and believe he died in 652. Others think he died between 450 and 510 A D.



## Krishnaraja

(711-775)

**T**his temple of Siva is self created for such beauty is not to be found in a work of art", thus states an inscription about the Ellora sculpture of Krishnaraja of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. He "caused to be constructed a temple of wonderful form on the mountain" which when the gods saw called it 'self created'. Anyone visiting the Kailasa temple of Ellora even today is astonished to see its massive dimensions, rock cuts and intricate craftsmanship.

Krishnaraja was an uncle of the reigning king Dantidurga. When the latter died without any child, Krishnaraja succeeded him to the Rashtrakuta throne. This is however contested by other historians who think that Krishnaraja deposed Dantidurga for oppressing the subjects. But this does not appear to be correct because in that case Krishnaraja would not have permitted the eulogy of his murdered nephew to appear in his own inscriptions. Perhaps the relative ousted was a cousin who entertained imperial ambitions.

Krishna was an able ruler and a skilful general. During his reign of 18 years he extended his empire by annexing Konkan, Karanataka, and parts of what is now Andhra Pradesh. He humiliated the Gangas and Vengi rulers. He defeated the proud Rahappa, and Kirtivarman Chalukya. He also took an expedition against Gangavadi and defeated its ruler Sripurusha. His son Yuvaraja Govinda attacked the Chalukyas of Vengi and defeated its ruler Vishnuvardhana IV. He placed Sana-phulla Silaharas in charge of Southern Konkan. Thus he consolidated his position, secured for his successors a dominant position in the South and paved the way for their participation in the politics of the North. Krishnaraja died sometime between 772 and 775.

But more important and of lasting interest were Krishna-

raja's building activities. He caused to be carved the Kailasa temple (of Ellora). The whole structure is hewn out of rock.

"An entire hillside was first demarcated and separated from a long range of mountains and then a huge temple was cut out of it. The Kailasa temple is a splendid achievement of art, and considering the technical skill and labour involved is unequalled in the history of the world." One historian calls it "as an architectural wonder of the world." This alone would give Krishnaraja an outstanding place. The famous Jain logician Akalanka Bhatta, the author of *Rajavartika* flourished in his reign. Many scholars lived in Devakula, known as Kanesvara after him. He also patronised art and literature.

#### Reading

B. N. Reu *History of Rashtrakutas*

# Sankaracharya<sup>1</sup>

(788-820) *Vij*

A rare and unique integrating force in the country's history and culture, Sankaracharya had a vision of things to come and gave the country what it needed most at a time of crisis. Even though his efforts might not have completely succeeded in checking the waves of foreign incursions, he certainly succeeded in preserving certain values for the next one thousand years.

By the time Sankara appeared on the national scene, Buddhism had weakened the national identity, and the process of cultural synthesis and political unification of country had practically exhausted itself. His efforts retrieved the country's cultural integration which in turn impregnated Hinduism with a will to survive—it did not crumble even with the defeats of the rulers at the hands of foreign invaders. He carried out many reforms which provided Hinduism with a higher evolution in thought and a philosophical binding force.

Sankara gave philosophy that could be drawn upon by the spiritually sophisticated and the laity—a rarefied philosophy for the elite and, a reasonable variant, freedom for the forms of worship and practical guidance for the laity. He codified forms of worship and reduced the large number of deities and sects to a few. Using the thesis of Avatars and Amsha, he provided Hinduism with a corpus of philosophical doctrines and prescribed rituals for temple worship.

Sankara propounded the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta which prescribed common sources of reference and methodology for discussions and prevented barren ritualism from becoming a national religion. It also helped to preserve Hinduism from doctrinal encroachments of Islam and Christianity.

With the object of providing learned teachers of religion to keep a watch over orthodoxy, Sankara established five *dhamas*

(*maths*) in the four corners of the country—Badrinath in the heights of the Himalayas, Dwarka on the western coast, Puri on the eastern coast, Kanchi in the Deccan and Sringeri in the south. For hundreds of years these *dhams* have attracted people from different corners of the country and thus they have proved a great integrating force. Sankara also reorganized the monastic orders—the wandering groups into a regular body who popularised his doctrines.

Sankara's scholarship succeeded in converting the scholastic teachers of the age—the Buddhists and the Mimamsakas. His contest with the leading exponent of Mimamsa ritualism, Mandana Mishra, brought Sankara an unprecedented fame. Mishra's accusation of Sankara's being a hidden Buddhist had some truth in it in as much as Sankara had opposed rituals claiming Vedic concepts of Madhyamika school of Buddhism.

As a matter of fact Buddhism declined in India because of Sankara's preaching. He was considered the strongest opponent of that religion. By his opposition of Mimamsakas, Sankara broke down the barriers between the Buddhist laity and Hinduism. Yet the thinker in him did not discard the value of devotion in religion and composed devotional hymns addressed to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. The Soundarya Lahari is one such outstanding work. He purged the worship of Devi of the objectionable Tantric practices that had crept in it and originated the Samayachar form of worship.

Sankara is one of the greatest names in religion and philosophy. In a very short span of life he attained so much by his scholarship as well as his reasonable approach to the common man's spiritual needs.

A number of legends are associated with Sankara's name. It is said that his mother was deeply religious and she would not touch food without bath in river that flowed at some distance from the village. To help her avoid trudging the distance, Sankara with his prayers brought the river closer to the village. Another one is that at the age of 8 while taking bath in the river, he was caught by the leg by a crocodile. His mother prayed to God that if her son escaped, she would let him take to sanyas. The prayers were responded to, Sankara had miraculous escape from the jaws of death and he became a sanyasi. Then it was at Sringeri that he saw a snake give

shelter under the shade of its hood to some frogs, and he established the first *math* there

Sankara learnt Advaita philosophy from Gaudapada-charya, on his advice wrote commentaries on the *Brahmsutras* and went to Varanasi to teach Sanskrit. One day on the way to the Ganga, he came across a Chandala with ferocious dogs and asked him to move away so that he, a Brahmin, could pass by. The Chandal queried since the entire cosmos was full of Brahman where should he move. A thought-provoking reply, Sankara respected the Chandal like his Guru. Later he visited the Himalayas and set up Badarikashram with an image of Vishnu and appointed a Nambudari to do the puja. He also established Jyotirmath and wrote commentaries on *Brahmasutras*, *Bhagavadgita* and on some of the *Upanishadas*. His main disciple was Padmapada. After some years' stay in the hills he went to Prayaga where he met the famous Kumarila Bhatt. Sankara propounded Vyasa's Vedanta and is one of the greatest philosophers. He died at the age of 32.

Sankara is believed to have been born at Kaladi (in Kerala) of religious minded parents. After his education, he travelled north to propound Vedanta based on Badarayana's *Brahma Sutras* and *Bhagavadgita*.

#### Reading

T M P Mahadevan *Sankaracharya*  
Baldeva Upadhyaya *Sankara (Hindi)*

# Andal

(8-9th Centuries)

Jessamine lady ! With your sweet smiles  
Torture me not ! —Andal

Andal is one of the most fascinating of the Indian women. A great Vishnavite sage, her ardour as a devotee is extremely intense and her poetic quality comparable to the best of the poets. Although the range of her experience is limited, she possesses an elusive charm and a penetrating sweetness in tone.

She imparts a highly sensuous colouring to the religious theme. Her passion for her divine lover is that of a voluptuous woman for a man, hardly the delicate, ethereal longing of a maiden for the man she is to wed. Yet sometimes she handles a love theme with effeminate delicacy e.g., she asks the flute (that Krishna plays upon) about the fragrance of Krishna's lips.

Smell they of myrrh ?  
Or do they smell of lotus flowers ?  
His beautiful lady lips of coral  
are they sweet ?

Andal's is a wonderful love story full of supernaturalism and the miraculous. She was found as a baby by Periyalvar, the foremost Vaishnavite poet in his garden. He brought her up as his daughter and her mind was nourished by the love story of Krishna. Andal later refused to marry a mortal, and boldly wore the garlands intended for Krishna's image. The story ends in Andal's union with her divine lover.

Andal has left only two works. *Tiru p paarai* (30 stanzas) and *Najacciyar* (143 stanzas) in both of which Krishna is the hero and she the heroine. The setting is either the Kavarattam

where Krishna romped among the cowherdresses on Yamuna or Madurapuri. *Tinu p-pavai* owes its origin to a religious observance among maidens of the cowherd's class. Girls, having fasted all night go every morning to bathe in the river and practise certain rites, which are to earn for them good husbands and for their country abundant rain. Andal assumes that she and her friends go from door to door, preaching and rousing the still sleepy girls. Finally, they land in the house of Nanda, Krishna's father. The door is opened for them by Nappinai, Krishna's wife. Finally Andal wants Krishna to help her friends in the rites, for he is not only the husband they require and the god they are ministering to do their rites but he is also their companion and playmate as well.

Andal's description of nature is vivid. This is how she portrays morning:

Do you not hear the chirping of the noisy birds  
And the churning of the curd by cowherds' wives to the  
jingle of the bracelets

In the *Najacciyar Tirumoli* Andal narrates to her maidens the wonderful dream she had of her marriage with Krishna. The elaborate rituals of a Brahmin wedding are narrated and her description is so popular that it is generally sung at the Vaishnavite marriages.

In a piece, *Pillai-t-tamil*, she imagines herself as a little girl whose doll house has been destroyed by the mischievous Krishna. Her works show extreme sensitiveness to beauty and flaming whole-souled devotion wrapped in sweet music.

## Bhoja

(995-1055)

“Mahmud turned back because the Hindu king Parmardeo was in the way and feared lest the great victory may be spoiled” wrote Ibn-ul-Athur, the admiring historian of Sultan Mahmud. The Sultan was retreating with huge spoils from the rich temple of Somnath in Gujarat, the king of Gujarat had failed to bar the route to the holy shrine. Offended at this barbarous act of Mahmud, Bhoja Parmardeo of Dharanagari had tried to bar the marauder's retreat and apprehending trouble and loss of the looted treasure, the Sultan had resorted to a diversion and escape route. Fleeing in great haste, the Sultan suffered hardship and great distress. Bhoja's Udaipur *Prasasti* claims that Bhoja inflicted defeat on the Sultan.

Bhoja was the son of Sindhuraja and a nephew of the renowned scholar-warrior Munja of Ujjain. In his youth Bhoja made extensive studies and acquired scholarship in Sanskrit and theoretical knowledge of statecraft. He gained skill in weapons and warfare, mastered the 64 arts and became an accomplished poet and scholar. On his father's death, about 1010 A D Bhoja succeeded to the throne. His kingdom extended in the north upto Banswara and Dungarpur, on the east to Bhilsa, on the south to the upper reaches of Godavari, Khandesh and Konkan and on the west to modern Kaira district. Bhoja consolidated his authority, rebuilt Dhara on a new model and shifted his capital there. He carried out campaigns against his neighbours. The Udaipur *Prasasti* sums up his military exploits. “Seeing the Karnatas, the lord of Lata, the king of Gujarat, the Turuskas, chief among whom were the lord of Chedi, Indraratha, Toggala, and Bhuma, conquered by his mercenaries alone, his hereditary warriors thought only of the strength of their arms, not of the numbers of fighters.” Like his predecessors he was an intrepid warrior, an astute general.



and a great conqueror. During his reign the country became prosperous and the Parmars rose to the zenith of their power. But his ambition involved him in ceaseless wars with the neighbouring rulers, some of whom he defeated but wars with others weakened the state and brought disaster. His extreme generosity too made holes in the royal treasury. Somesvar of Karnata even sacked Dhara in 1044, and after Bhoja's death in 1055 Karna of Chedi and Bhima of Gujarat boldly broke the fortifications of Dhara and captured the capital. Bhoja had no competent successor and the state was divided between the victorious kings.

Before the enemies could lay their hands on his capital, the icy hands of death had crept over Bhoja's body. He had performed the duties prescribed by the Sastras and ordered "After my death my hands ought to be placed outside the chariot which will carry my corpse and the following stanza recited

Whose hand is this, O wife and son !  
 Whose hand O all my house !  
 Alone I came alone I go  
 With nothing on my hands and feet

And, the long procession went on chanting these lines all through the way to the cremation ground. The lines in translated form are even now recited as a reminder of destiny. Perhaps this is a reflection of the catastrophic reverses of fortune. Bhoja had suffered in his early life. He always carried with him the thought that the life and its enjoyment were uncertain like the waves of the sea and said

If men but saw the hand of death  
 Impending over their heads  
 Even food would give no joy  
 Much less the deeds that are not right

Bhoja as a mark of guidance says that when a man is up the morning he should ask himself What good can I do today, and advises

Perform today the duty of tomorrow,  
 the afternoon's before noon  
 For death won't wait to see if you have done  
 the duty of the day or not  
 If you the now dead, old decrepit  
 are life's disasters now destroyed  
 The rush of illness quite arrested  
 that all these men are lost in mirth?

And it was motivation of such thoughts that Bhoja would daily distribute and bestow gold on petitioners. He was accessible to the poorest. Not only that he would also go out in the nights to acquaint himself with the people's conditions. There are innumerable legends about his nocturnal visits as also about his tolerance, generosity, indulgence and rich awards to poets, especially when they made lively repartee, and of his benefitting from the observations of others.

Bhoja himself was a great scholar and poet. He wrote treatises on many subjects including poetics, rhetoric, polity, philosophy, astronomy and architecture. He is said to have compiled 104 poems to match the 104 temples that he built. He surveyed the whole of Sanskrit and Prakrit literature and got compiled an encyclopedia on arts and sciences. From Bhoja's time unfortunately a new form of poetry became predominant in which emotion was less important than ingenious play on words. The completion of half stanzas was a favourite poetic exercise. During his time he also got books written on the art of poetics and literary criticism, vast anthologies prepared, books on astrology, astronomy, music and architecture composed and Hindu law restated. In the history of Hindu law Bhoja's role is a landmark—with him arose Mitakshara law.

Bhoja was also a great architect and builder. The construction of temples and encouragement to Sanskrit culture received great impetus from him. He established a college for Sanskrit studies—the temple of Saraswati where a band of scholars lived. He conceived the idea of turning the parched Vindhya hills into a green paradise and succeeded in doing so. His 670 sq Km lake by damming the Betwa valley changed the climate of Malwa. The lake was named Bhoja Pal (Pal meaning the embankment of an artificial lake) and is now pro-

nounced as Bhopal.

Bhoja was an ideal king. He was the greatest warrior of the century and the greatest scholar of his age. He is remembered by posterity for his love for scholarship and scholars and for the play of wit and poetic images that characterised his literary *durbars*.

Reading :

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| P. T. Srinivas Ayyangar : | <i>Bhoja Raja</i>                |
| D. C. Ganguly :           | <i>History of Parmar Dynasty</i> |
| Pratipal Bhatia :         | <i>The Parmars</i>               |
| Valall :                  | <i>Bhoja Prabandha</i>           |

insisted on the king, when the latter agreed to be converted, to change his name. Finally the Hoyasālī king had to change his name to Vishnu-Vardhana. Such conservatism is often harmful for the growth of a cult. In spite of these, Ramanuja has been considered a liberal.

K. V. R. Aiyangar observes

“To the comprehensive philosophy which vindicated the right and obligation of the free soul, Ramanuja attached a religious side which gave wide scope for spiritual emotion. The idea of God as immanent in all high thought and endeavour by whosoever the effort was made unfolds a limitless tolerance which overrides the barriers of caste and creed. By demonstrating the compatibility and his views of redemption with the old tradition he assured its defenders.

# Rajendra Chola

(1070-1122)

Rajendra Chola's victories in wars and annexation of new territories to his kingdom read like a fascinating romance. Continuing with his father's policy of expansion, Rajendra, also known as Gangaikonda Chola, conquered on the one hand the Chalukyas and on the other Mahipal I of Bengal. He possessed a magnificent fleet, with which he closed the seas and invaded Ceylon, the Nicobar Islands, Kondaram, Malaya and the Shailendras. He defeated them and annexed many of the territories to his empire.

Rajendra's name is associated not only with these conquests or the wars against the Shailendras across the seas but also with magnificent public utility and irrigation works which were based on the idea of controlling a river at the head of its delta and thus secure the regular watering of lands. These works made the Kaveri delta a greenery and continued to supply water to the fields till the 19th century.

Rajendra was a great builder. He built a new capital city at Gangaikonda-Cholapuram which was adorned with a magnificent palace and a vast artificial lake with stone embankment, more than 25 Km long. These are in ruins which can even now be seen in the Tiruchirappalli district. Only a massive temple reminds of Rajendra's interest in architecture.

Rajendra's father Rajaraja too was a great builder. The *shikhara* of the great Siva temple he built at Tanjore consists of 14 storeys and rises to a height of 190 feet. It is crowned by a massive dome consisting of a single block of stone which was carried to the immense height by being rolled up along an inclined road, about 62 km long specially built for this purpose. The massive building has from base to top sculptures and decorative mouldings. It occupies the centre of the

# Ramanuja

(1017—1137)

Ramanuja is one of those pioneers of India who led to her spiritual revival. He propounded his philosophy of Visishtadvaita or qualified monism in reaction to Sankara's absolute monism which appealed more to reason than to the heart. Although his ideas were based on Vedanta, his faith was influenced by *Vishnu* and *Bhagavata Puranas*. His philosophy admitted Pancharatra and derived sustenance from the songs of Alwars and other Vaishnavite saints. Ramanuja's thoughts were more religious than philosophical.

According to Visishtadvaita there are three eternal principles namely *chit* (*atman* or self), *achit* (*prakriti*) and *Isvara*. Of these *Isvara* is the *viseshya* (that is principal). *Isvara* is the infinite knowledge, bliss, creator, controller and destroyer. He is the protector of devotees and bestower of rewards for actions. His vision leads to cessation of worldly desires and heals all miseries. The *avatars* come from his body to establish religion on earth. The *atman* is eternal, formless, changeless and beyond sense perception. It is both knowledge and knower, doer and enjoyer. It is controlled by *Isvara*, but at the end of life it does not merge in the Absolute. *Achit* (*prakriti*) is liable to transformation. Though both *atman* and *prakriti* are real, they emerge from *Isvara* and are his adjectives. Contact of the *atman* with *prakriti* produces in the former nescience, desire and action which are destroyed only on the release of the contact. All imperfections and suffering belong to the *atman* and *prakriti* and not to *Isvara*. Ramanuja saw no contradiction in unity expressing itself in pluralities and that is how his philosophy is termed qualified monism.

In Ramanuja's philosophy the Lord takes five forms, namely *Vasudeva*, *Vyruha*, *vibhava* (*avatars*), *antarjamin* and

*archa* (idol or deity) Vasudeva is the highest Brahman (and the highest cause) from whom originates the individual soul (*i e samkarshana*), from *samkarshana* emerges the internal organ (*Pradyumna*), from which in turn comes out ego (*Aniruddha*) He thought that the devotee can overcome karma by the divine grace By worshipping the *avatars* such as Rama, Krishna etc he can attain the *vyuha*, and by worshipping the *vyuha* he can attain Vasudeva, for the devotee the best worship is to completely surrender (*prapatti*) himself to Isvara Ramanuja's form of devotion has been called by an authority as 'meditation with affection' He himself calls steady remembrance as *bhakti*, for him it is the same as *upasana* (meditation) This can be obtained through *viveka*, *vimoka* (free mind), *abhyasa*, *kriya*, *kalyana*, *anavasada* (freedom from dejection) and *anuddharsa* (absence of exaltation) Ramanuja adds that when the individual performs action according to his caste and stage in life, his mind becomes purified which helps in producing *bhakti* or *jnana* in him

Traditional worship offers various forms (of worship) *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* and *madhurya* Chaitanya took up *madhurya*, intense devotion for his movement Ramanuja advocated single minded devotion and worship of a personal deity who rewards the worshipper even with salvation The devotee can worship images even without securing assistance or intervention of any one, by meditation and concentration he can help himself

Ramanuja was the son of Kesava and Kantimati and studied initially under Yadava Prakasa and later under Yamunacharya whom he succeeded as the head of the Vaishnava sect Ramanuja wrote his *Sri Bhashya* at the request of Yamunacharya

Ramanuja's *bhakti* cult has come in for severe criticism for its conservatism It was open only to the top three strata of society and the sudras had to content themselves with complete surrender (*prapatti*) This was rather odd in as much as Ramanuja himself had acquired knowledge from a sudra Ramanuja's conservatism led even to his clash with the liberal Saiva Chola king and consequently he had to flee from there Even in the court of Hoyasala king Bittala Deva, to which he came, his conservative views prevailed He

courtyard with other subsidiary chapels, but the whole area is dominated by the high tower over the shrine which is a conspicuous landmark in the locality

The other great and notable achievement of the Cholas is the bronze figures and figurines that were cast during their reign. The Nataraja figures and images—and also the figures of the saints of the period—are counted as masterpieces

#### Reading

K. A. N. Sastri *A History of South India*



# Hemachandra Suri

(1089-1172)

Acharya Hemachandra Suri brought two of the country's religions closer. He focused attention on points of agreement between Hinduism and Jainism. He gave Hindu thought and mythology, including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Jain garb and popularised these through his works. His *Trisasti Salaka Purusha Charitra* (The Lives of 63 Great Men) is a masterpiece. It narrates the life stories of great saints and personages belonging to mythology and epic poetry and also contains a wealth of fairy tales and stories. One of its parts viz the *Mahavir Charitra* is of great literary merit. It is rich in ideas, imagery, metaphors and similes. Two of his other works *Pramana Mimansa* (examination of the means of proof) and *Yogasastra* (a great didactic poem of the Jains) are also of great literary merit. Besides these, the Acharya also gave his co religionists important text-books on temporal subjects e g grammar, lexicography, poetics, metrics.

Hemachandra often mentions the doctrine of Karma vis-a-vis the stories of rebirth of great men and their destinies, resulting from their good and bad deeds. His work is mostly in simple and unaffected Sanskrit language which too received a great impetus at his hands. But it is wide in imagery. Here is a piece of his poetry

Hail to the Jain hero's eyes  
Whose pupils are rigid with pity  
And met with tears  
Even for him who has committed sin

Hemachandra was born at Dhundhuka, near Ahmedabad, in 1089. His parents were pious Jains and they had decided, while he was still young, to give him to the

service of religion—they made him a monk. His teacher Devachandra also influenced the course of his life. Later Hemachandra's scholarship attracted the attention of Jaisinha Siddharaja, the Chalukya king, who was keenly interested in literature, science and philosophy. His successor Kumarpala was attached still more to the Jain saint and at his own request was converted to Jainism. During the reign of these two kings Hemachandra was engaged in literary activity. For his scholarship and literary contributions, the Acharya was called *Kalikāl Sarvagya*, the omniscient of the Kali age. It was mainly due to Hemachandra that Gujarat became a stronghold of Svetāmbara Jains and saw literature flourish. He died in 1172.

One of Hemachandra's works is a rich source for philology and grammar. Instances of Apabhraṃsa cited by him help in showing growth of Hindi from the language in which he wrote his poetry. An example

A damsel rejoices that her lover  
had fallen bravely in field,  
Hers would have been a shame,  
had he returned dishonoured

For the influence he wielded in shaping the course of religious harmony and integration, Hemachandra has been placed by K. M. Panikkar besides Valmiki, Vyasa and Sankara and recognised as 'one of the makers of modern Indian mind'.

#### Reading

H. M. Johnson—*Trisasti Salaka Lakshta Chaturā* (Translation)

# Gorakhanath

(12th Century)

'Awaken Machhinder ' Gorakha has come,' called forth the disciple Gorakhanath. Gorakha's guru Matsyendranath (popularly known as Machhinder) had strayed from right path and got involved with a woman in Kadalipattan. Learning of this 'moral degradation', Gorakhanath trudged the distance and brought back the guru to the right course. He thus saved his guru from downfall and ruin. Yet Gorakhanath was a man of humility and discipline.

Gorakha had by his austere living risen to be one of the 84 Vajrayani Siddhas. But he did not approve of their free life and dissociated himself from them. He liked the stress of the Naths on self control and moral life and was converted to the Nath cult by Matsyendranath. He was well aware of the temptations, say of developing powers to perform miracles, attaining nine nidhis and 12 siddhis, but shunned these as he thought that a yogi should better seek and acquire the immortality of the spirit, drink the voice of the *sabda* and enjoy union with Siva and Sakti. According to the Naths cause and effect—Siva and his Sakti (prowess) are the same. An individual is a part of the Brahmanda (universe) which too is assimilated in the individual. Before its origin the Brahmanda was a part of Siva and Siva and Sakti formed part of the individual. He can gradually develop control over *Ila*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna*, arouse the *Muladhar Kundalini* lying dormant and enter into the *Samadhi* to attain peace and bliss (*Parmananda*).

The goal of life for a Nath yogi is to understand the real self and thereby eternalise the real life. This can be attained through yoga, through *sadhana* which has several stages. The yogi should transcend his lower self by controlling his passions and sex life, vital air and mind. Sex can be controlled by re-

peating the word given by guru and listening to the inner self. He can control vital air by prolonging the period before the intake of the breath (*kanalja jnana*). This also gives him control over sexual power. The mind can be controlled by stopping, negating or emptying out mental activity, added by physical, moral and spiritual contemplation. (This also gives him power to control vital air and sex). This can be done in various ways e.g. contemplation (*tarka*), stopping the going on in it, intellectual and analytical perception (*jnana*), recitation (*japa*), reversal of normal activities. Thus controlled, the mind reaches the fourth state i.e. state of self transcendence (*unmatti*) and supra-mental i.e. void where the activities of sex, vital air and mind stop functioning. At this stage the *atman* is in the state of *satchidananda*—truth consciousness-bliss and is known by several names e.g. *śabda*, *rasa* (union), *amrit*, *jyoti* (light). The efforts to reach this state should be in normal manner and gradual. This is Sahaja-Yoga.

The final stage of *Sahaja-Samadhi* (natural trance or inborn equilibrium) or Turīyatīti (the fourth supramental state) or *atit sunya* (supreme void though not void) is attained when the self is absorbed in the self beyond all dualism or the mind sees and resides in the mind or the mental activity (desire) is absorbed in the mind. On reaching this stage the yogi becomes *sama-drishti* and attains *kanalja moksha*. To put it differently, it is raising the *sakta* (attention) through the magnetic aid of *śabda*, imparted by the teacher and heard within, to unite with and merge itself in *atman*, the Supreme Self.

This is a kind of Rajayoga and is also known as Atma-Yoga, Siddhanta-Yoga. This is open to all classes but requires of them a mental and moral detachment.

Gorakhnath condemned unintelligent worship of gods and goddesses and stood for abolishing differences of castes and creeds. On the other hand he preached simple things such as avoiding excess food, drink and sexual indulgence and if at all to absorb them to do so in spiritual contemplation and deep meditation. Unlike Sankara, he considered the world as real and preached the enjoyment of life.

Gorakha divides yogis into several classes e.g. novice, initiated and well-versed. The novice enjoys the state of *Samadhi*, the initiated reaches in close proximity of *Brahma*,

and the well versed becomes pure

Several legends are associated with Gorakhanath. He came of a humble family, but nothing definite of his time and place is known. All that we know is that he lived sometime between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, wandered over long distances including the North West, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bengal, Assam and Nepal and he should have come from one of these places.

The Nath cult was originally atheistic. But later it came under the influence of Saivite asceticism and Tantric-Yoga. The external form of the Naths are Mekhala, Sringi, Kantha, Karnamudra, Kaupin, Pungi, Vyaghrambar, Khadaun, Jholi and Kanchhedan. While asking for alms they play upon Ektara and say 'Alakha Niranjana' and take food after sounding the Pungi.

Reading

Rangeya Raghava *Gorakhanath*

# Bhaskaracharya

[12th Century]

“One pair out of a flock of geese remained sporting in the water and saw seven times half the square root of the flock proceeding to the shore, tired of diversion. Tell me, dear girl, the number of the flock?”

“If thou knowest two numbers such that the sum of their cubes is a square and the sum of their squares a cube, I acknowledge thee to be an eminent mathematician”

The ‘dear girl’ referred to was Lilavati and the person who posed the problem, her father Bhaskaracharya. The time and place 12th Century India. The literary and cultural activities were then on the decline but Bhaskara made several outstanding discoveries in algebra which could be surpassed by the European countries only by about the 18th century.

Bhaskara composed his great treatise *Siddhanta Siromani* in 1150, and another work *Karana Kautuhala* in 1183-84. The *Siddhanta Siromani* is divided into four parts, viz., *Patiganita*, i.e. arithmetic (also known as *Lilavati* after the daughter), *Bijaganita*, i.e. algebra, *Grahaganita* (based on *Surya Siddhanta*), and *Goladhyaya*. The last two parts deal with astronomy, especially motions of planets and calculations of the sphere.

About *Lilavati* a story is prevalent, that Bhaskara's daughter's name was Lilavati after whom he named the work. A good astrologer that he was, Bhaskara came to know from her horoscope that her married life would be cut short. This disaster could be prevented, Bhaskara computed, if her marriage was solemnized on a definite date punctually at a specified time. He made all arrangements for this. There were no accurate means of measuring time in those days. For this purpose, he constructed a sand glass in which sand would flow from one vessel to another beneath it through a small orifice in

a fixed interval of time. (This was a popular device of measuring time in those days) On the day previous to the marriage, Lilavati inquisitively looked into this new instrument which had been installed in her house, and as fate would have it, a small pearl from the ornament on her nose fell into the sand and got mixed with it. This retarded the movement of the sand with the result that the marriage was celebrated after the time which had been fixed after careful astrological calculations. Lilavati lost her husband soon after the marriage. To console her in her life-long grief, Bhaskara taught her arithmetic and named his work after her.

The *Lilavati* contains 278 verses and deals with various subjects e.g., units of weights and measures, twenty arithmetical operations, viz., addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square root, cube, cube root, five rules of reduction of fraction, rule of 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 terms and barter, 8 arithmetical determinations, mixture, progression, plane figure, excavation, stacks, saw, mounds of grain and shadow of a gunman, indeterminate equations of second degree, triangles, quadrilaterals, areas of circles, volumes of spheres, cones, pyramids etc. A number of commentaries on and translations of *Lilavati* have appeared within the last eight centuries.

*Bhaganita* is a complete and systematic exposition of algebra in 213 verses. It describes rules to deal with calculations of zero and the concept of negative and positive numerals and quantities. Bhaskara ably handled problems of the indeterminate equations and gave both algebraic and geometric solutions. A rough conception of infinity that any other number divided by zero gives infinity first occurs in his work. Bhaskara had some clear notions of differential calculus also.

Bhaskara abbreviated notation which made considerable progress over his predecessors who did not know algebraic symbolism and depended on words and sentences. (Of course, he too wrote 'multiplication', 'equality' and 'inequality')

Bhaskara attributes the motions of the planets to winds. He explains revolution of planets by the theory of epicycle and analyses the motion of the sun by considering changes in longitude not only from day to day but over short periods so that its motion may be uniform during small intervals.

In Goladhyaya Bhaskara gave value for the ratio of the circumference to the diameter. "When the diameter of a circle is multiplied by 3927 and divided by 1250, the quotient is the near circumference" As for the area and volume of a sphere "In a circle one quarter of the diameter multiplied by 4 is the net all round of the ball This content or surface of the sphere multiplied by the diameter and divided by 6 is the precise solid or cubic content within the sphere "

Dr Spottiswoode writes, "It must be admitted that the penetration shown by Bhaskara in his analysis is in the highest degree remarkable, that the formula which he establishes, and his method of establishing it, bear more than a resemblance—they bear a strong analogy—to the corresponding process in modern astronomy, and that the majority of scientific person will learn with surprise the existence of such a method in the writings (of) so distant a period and so distant a region "\*"

Bhaskara was born in 1114 at Vijjadavida in the Sahyadri Hills Teaching and learning mathematics was an ancestral vocation with him He learnt mathematics from his father, mathematician and he himself parted the knowledge to his son Loksamudra

\* Jour RAS 1859



## Kalhana

(12th Century)

Indians in the past lacked historical approach which accounts for the difficulties encountered in fixing up periods and dates of important events in the country's life. Kalhana, however, is a rare phenomenon, rather an exception, and it could be said that he possessed a historical approach. In the *Rajatarangini*, a long narrative poem relating to the history of Kashmir from the earliest times to the 12th century A.D. Kalhana has chronicled internal struggles perhaps at the instigation of his patron, Alakdatta in 1149-52. In fairness it should be said that Kalhana did this without turning himself into a court panegyric. Besides being a historian, Kalhana was also a poet of great ability and industry.

Kalhana was deeply involved with the idea of *dharma* and for him historical events were basically the unfolding of the whole system of *dharma* in its religious, social and even legal manifestations. It meant not only the adherence to the traditions of religion but also the upholding of the social institutions as one perscribed in the Sastras. Kalhana's ideas on the writing of history were directly influenced by the Brahmanical as well as Buddhist traditions. The difference between the two is that whereas the Brahmanical system does not show sharp consciousness about time, the Buddhist system has clear consciousness about it. Of the *Rajatarangini* the first half (first 3 books) has the impression of the Brahmanical historical framework, and the second half (books 4th to 7th) shows historical understanding. The maturity of Kalhana's historical thinking is evident in the last book (book 8) which deals with the period immediately preceding his time.

Kalhana's father Champaka was a faithful adherent of king Harsha of Kashmir. Kalhana was born in about 1100 A.D. at Pratihapur in Kashmir. Although he was a devotee of

Siva, he had a poor opinion of Tantric rules and respected Buddhism and *ahimsa*

Kalhana had made deep study of literature and astrology and wrote the chronicles after Harsha's death which led to the division of the kingdom by his enemies Uchchhala and Sussala. Kashmir was in turmoil till 1145 when prince Bhoja supported by the Dard tribes rose in revolt. Part of what Kalhana wrote was based on his personal knowledge and observation. He took an objective view of the events and his detachment enabled him to envisage dispassionately the merits and defects of his countrymen. His mind was in constant touch with reality.

Kalhana studied all the available sources such as literature, *inscriptions of various kinds*, records of construction of temples, memoirs, palaces, land grants, *prasastis*, (eulogistic manuscripts), coins, local traditions, family records etc. Yet his chronology is of questionable validity and his characters unverifiable. Also many dates are not correct and in one case he omits to record an important event—the actual onslaught of Mahmud Ghazni's forces against Kashmir in 1015.

In writing about Kalhana it needs to be remembered that Kalhana's aim was to produce a work that may conform to the demands of writers on poetics and at the same time to impress moral maxims on his readers. He says, "It is the creative genius of the poet alone which by its power of production of beauty can place past times before the eyes of men". The dominant sentiment of *Rajatarangini* is resignation and stress has been laid on the impermanence of power and riches, the transient character of all earthly fame and glory, and retribution which reaches all doers of evil in this and future life, the deeds commended by the rules of Dharmaśāstra or Nītiśāstra. Kalhana's work is marked by a powerful moral bias, apart from its highly aesthetic appeal.

#### Reading

R.S. Pandit *Rajatarangini the Saga of the Kings of Kashmir*

# Kamban

[12th Century]

Those who know him but a day would give their lives for him." Such is the high esteem in which Rama was held by Kamban, the author of the Tamil Ramayanam. After his name the work has come to be popularly known as *Kamba Ramayanam*.

The *Kamba Ramayanam* is a voluminous epic of about 40000 lines. Yet it is to the credit of the author's style and human approach that it sustains throughout the reader's interest. Although Kamban borrowed details of the story from Valmiki's Ramayana, yet it has its own originality. Kamban's Rama is a godhead who in spite of his religious epithets is a human personality with his weaknesses. Even Rama's enemies are human characters and it is their magnificence which goes to make Rama's character superb. Similarly Kamban refused to admit any type of social superiority. His own hero Rama is a democrat and he insists that character is the only criterion for judging a person.

Besides, there are a few other points of difference. In *Kamba Ramayanam* Rama is the central figure and owes allegiance to none but *dharma*. He has human attachment and tenderness and his heart bleeds in the fight against unrighteousness. Kamban's other characters too are giant-like, but they all love, suffer and fight. He manipulates his characters and situations in a way that they evoke great interest in the poet who portrays them.

'Kamban was influenced by the spirit of sheer aesthetic enjoyment of Valluvar, of ennobling ethics and of devout worship fostered by religion'. The noteworthy features of *Kamba Ramayanam* are the poet's absolute command over the art of versification, mellifluousness of verse, language, word values, images, humour, dialogues, dramatic situations, etc. For

sion of war he concluded a treaty which they observed meticulously. When Dāndanayak Abhaydeva of Gujarat sought the permission of his Prime Minister Jagatdeva Pratihara to seize the property of some visitors from Chahaman territory, Jagatdeva threatened, "If Abhaydeva laid his hands on the people of Sapadalaksha, he would have him sewn within the belly of a donkey."

Prithviraja was a great patron of literature and his court was adorned by a number of poets and scholars, illustrious amongst them were Chand Berdai (author of the famous *Prithviraja Raso*), Ashadhara, Vidyapati Gandha, Vagishwara Ananya Das, Janardana and Prithvibhat.

Prithviraja had a number of queens, three of whom were prominent—Ichchanidevi, Shashivrata and Sanyogita. A romantic tale surrounds Sanyogita, daughter of the Gahadavala king Jayachandra of Kanauj, a rival of the Chauhan king.

Prithviraja had made his power felt in the north but he could not enjoy his well established kingdom for long. Mohammed Ghuri carried on successive military excursions into the kingdom of Chauhans in the Punjab and made a bid for the conquest of Hindustan. He first conquered Taberhind which caused consternation in the minds of Chahaman allies who came in deputation to Prithviraja and reported that 'Sahibuddin had pillaged and burnt most of their cities, defiled their women and reduced them to a miserable plight. There is scarcely a valley that is not suffocating with Rajputs who have fled thither for protection from tyranny. The noblest of the Rajput forces have disappeared and he has now established his capital at Multan.' Prithviraja was moved and set out to teach the foreigner a lesson. In a pitched battle in 1190-1191 the Rajput forces defeated Ghuri who managed to escape.

Mohammed Ghuri however, did not keep quite. In order to avenge himself, he prepared his forces and marched with a large army. He sent his emissary Ruqunuddin Hunzih to Ajmer proposing Prithviraja to embrace Islam and to acknowledge his supremacy. Prithviraja treated the proposal with contempt and proceeded against his enemy much against the advice of his officer Someswara who was against the march. Someswara tried to persuade Prithviraja not to move further and this Prithviraja suspected as an act of treachery and set

off the suspect's ears and dismissed him. The latter turned into a bitter enemy of Prithviraja and joined the enemy camp.

Prithviraja sent Ghuri a letter that he should feel satisfied with Taberhind and should not proceed further. Ghuri carried protracted negotiations, exploited the opportunities and through tactics overpowered Chahaman forces at Tarai. Prithviraja, as story goes, was taken prisoner and put to death. *The Prithviraja Raso*, literary work of Chand Bardai, sings the story of the hero's valour.

The defeat brought disaster to the whole country. The morale of the ruling princes and people was broken and the foreigners made an easy in road into the country.

Prithviraja was a general of high calibre but he lacked political foresight. He did not fight an aggressive war nor did he pursue a defeated enemy and missed opportunities to break the foreign power. Prithviraja's reign is a watershed in Indian history which cannot be ignored in spite of his inability to defeat the designs of a foreign invader.

Reading

Notes

instance when Rama is leaving Ayodhya for 14 years, he goes to see his father, and "Without swaying chauri, without the white umbrella, while destiny pulling, led the way, and Dharma weeping went behind Before he who thrilled and huddled with pleasure to think and think 'He like the rain cloud will come with the crown on' The man went alone "

Kamban's humour is subtle When Ravana asks Hanuman with a laugh, "Messenger of Vali's son ' Is the brave Vali doing well ? His kingdom is undisturbed"—fully well knowing that Vali had been killed by Rama Hanuman replies, "Don't fear Rakshasa ' He is gone to heaven, the fierce war-like Vali, he will not come back, his tail too is gone' Vali, it is to be recalled, had defeated Ravana and tied him to his tail and dragged for some distance

Kamban was a native of Tiruvalundur in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu He came from the Uvaccha community A chieftain named Sadaiyappan patronised Kamban So masterly was Kambana's treatment of the subject matter that after him no Tamil poet dared to attempt his hand on Ramayanam

#### Reading

N V Rajagopalan *Kamb Ramayana*

# Prithviraja

## (1162-1192)

When Salubuddin Mohammed Ghuri of Afghanistan sent a diplomatic agent in 1178 to the court of Prithviraja III, the Chauhan king of Ajmer and Delhi, with the mission to form an alliance against the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Chauhan (also known as Chahaman) king turned down the proposal with contempt. And, when he received the news of Mohammed's defeat at the hands of Chalukya Mularaja II of Gujarat, he was greatly delighted. Later Prithviraja had himself to fight battles against the foreign invader.

Prithviraja III was born the son of Someswara, king of Sapadalaksha, and Kalchuri princess, Karpuradevi around 1162 (according to some 1159) and received education in letters and military science. On his father's death in 1177 Prithviraja was put on the throne under the regency of his mother. Fortunately he had the support of capable officers. His Prime Minister Kadambwasa 'guarded the six virtues' of Prithviraja and sent the imperial armies in all directions to add to the glory of sovereign, and his army commander Bhuvanikamalla exterminated the Nagas who were dangerous to the safety of the two princes, the other being Prithviraja's brother, Hariraya. Prithviraja took over the reins of government in 1178.

Prithviraja's ascending the throne was not liked by his cousin Nagarjuna who ran away from Gudapura and Prithviraja had to fight a battle against him. Prithviraja overran and occupied Gudapura and then proceeded to Ajameru where he hung the severed heads of his enemies at the gates of the fort to serve as a deterrent to other rebels. In 1182 he defeated the Bhadanakas and went on *digvijaya*. In a pitched battle he defeated Parmar of Jejakbhukti and the legendary Alah and Udai, famous for their bravery. In 1187 he fought a battle against Chalukya Bhima II, king of Gujarat and on the conclu-

sion of war he concluded a treaty which they observed meticulously. When Dandanayak Abhaydeva of Gujarat sought the permission of his Prime Minister Jagatdeva Pratahara to seize the property of some visitors from Chahaman territory, Jagatdeva threatened, "If Abhaydeva laid his hands on the people of Sapadalaksha, he would have him sewn within the belly of a donkey."

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Reading

Notes

# Jayadeva

(12th Century)

‘Sri Jayadeva’s *Gitagovindam* has been rightly acclaimed as one of the loveliest and most beloved poems in the Sanskrit language, one of the loveliest indeed in the whole treasury of human literature’—Duncan Greenless says in his preface to *the Song of Divine Love*

*Gitagovinda Kavyam*, or *Gitagovindam* as it is popularly known, literally means ‘the poem in which Govinda (Krishna) is extolled through songs’ It describes how Radha keeps herself aloof from Krishna on account of jealousy, the consequent yearning of the loving pair, the efforts of Radha’s faithful friend and confidant to bring the lovers together, their hopes and disappointments and ultimately their reconciliation and union And all this has been done with uninhibited frankness the love being on physical plane For this reason the *Gitagovindam* has been called by some as a masterpiece of erotic literature and by others as a work requiring mystical interpretation

According to those who give the *Gitagovindam* a mystical interpretation, the love of Krishna and Radha is not human love, it is the eternal love between God and his human devotees The *Bhaktamala* considers it as a religious allegory in which

Radhika, the heroine is heavenly wisdom The milk maids, who divert Krishna from his allegiance to her, are the senses of sight, touch etc Krishna pursuing them is the human soul, which attaches itself to earthly pleasures The return of Krishna to his first love is the return of the repentant sinner to God, which gives joys in heaven

It is pleaded that the poem should be read like the *Bhagavatam* with the devotees’ heart and not something that draws debased, degrading and blasphemous pictures

In plain language in the *GitaGovindam* Radha stands for human soul and Krishna for God, and Radha's love is the thirst of the human soul for God

The *GitaGovindam* shows the poet's admirable skill in melody and rhythm. In the melody of its diction, in the perfection of its composition, in the ease of its alliterations and in the expression of varied emotions, the *GitaGovindam* has probably the first place in lyrical literature of the world. Sound and sense have been dealt with such perfection that it remains untranslatable. Jayadeva has a great command over language and meters and he is sensitive to the melody of the words.

The *GitaGovindam* is original and avoids monotony. The songs have been presented with *raga* and *tala* of the music and dance which they are to accompany. They have no stereotyped form and in each song 'the recitative and the song, the narrative and the description and speeches are skilfully interwoven, all with deliberate purpose'. Because of its musical quality it has captivated hearts of people who have sung it for centuries and still sing it in temples as well as in festivals organized at his birth place—Kendubilva, in Bengal. In this work of devotion, Krishna is entreated to hear the hymns, each stanza of the hymns ends with the refrain 'Jai Jagdish Hare' (Conquer, O Lord of the world, O Hari !)

Jayadeva was the son of Bhojadeva and Radhadevi (or Bhamadevi), a poor Brahmin couple, who died when Jayadeva was just a child. Because of the penury he left Kendubilva and went on a pilgrimage to Puri, where he was married to Padmavati. On return to his village, he built a hut and installed an image of Krishna. He was absorbed in loving devotion to Krishna and started writing the *GitaGovindam*. It is said that Jayadeva had conceived the book at Puri, taking the broad Puri sea in ecstasy for the holy Yamuna.

The *Bhaktimala* has a number of legends about Jayadeva. It is said that when he was writing the verse in song 19, an idea flashed in his mind that 'the only remedy is that you place the tender petals of your delicious feet upon my head as a diadem divine'. This shocked the poet and he left the verse incomplete. But when he came back after sometime he found the verse completed by the divine hand and ending देहि मे पादसङ्ग-

मुद्रम् Another legend is that on receiving an order from Krishna, one verse of the king of Puri was incorporated in each chapter of Jayadeva's book

Jayadeva was one of the five jewels of the court of Raja Lakshmana Sen of Bengal, the other four poets being Govardhana, Dhoi, Sarana, and Umapatidhara While Jayadeva was on a pilgrimage to Brindavan his wife passed away On return Jayadeva too breathed his last

The *GitaGovindam* is most exquisite in its melody, metaphors and alliterations It has been the favourite of scholars and saints alike Chaitanya was very fond of it A verse of Jayadeva is given below by way of illustration

His black body sandal bedecked,  
Clad in yellow, garlanded, with his  
earrings dancing on his cheeks as he  
sporteth, smiling ever, Hari amidst  
the band of loving maidens maketh  
merry in the merriment of their sport  
One of the maidens claspeth Hari  
fast to her throbbing heart,  
and singeth in the high—  
Pancham key  
Yet another doth stand  
deeply dreaming of Krishna's lotus face,  
whose sportive glances have caught  
and won her heart for its own

Reading

Vinay Mohan Sharma *GitaGovinda* (translation)

# Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti

(12th Century)

Every year hundreds of thousands of men and women throng at Ajmer to seek peace and solace at the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, the greatest Sufi saint of India. The Chishtiya school with its liberal and tolerant outlook counts a large number of people as its adherents and a visit to the shrine is considered a very pious act.

Moinuddin was a disciple of the Persian saint Khwaja Usman Harwani of Chisht and came from Ghazni to Lahore in 1161. After *chilla* (i.e. spiritual purification) at the tomb of Data Ganj Bakhsh and brief visits to Multan and Delhi, Moinuddin decided to settle down at Ajmer. This was a bold and imaginative decision on the part of Khwaja because that time Ajmer was not only the seat of the Chahaman power but it was also a great Hindu religious and pilgrimage centre. Chishti's settling down at such a centre gave Islam an opportunity to reach its message of equality and brotherhood amongst the so-called low caste suffering Hindus. Moinuddin conducted his religious and spiritual activity from Ajmer and to this city he stuck till the end. His shrine attracts common man by the thousand.

Chishti was a man of wide sympathies, catholic view and deep humanism. His ideology rested on three principles.

*One* Sphere of oneness all in one. If we transcend the externals and look around we find the lover, the beloved and the love itself to be one. His pantheistic approach brought him very close to the Hindu religious thought of Upanishads.

*Two* Service to humanity. To help the distressed, poor and down trodden is the highest form of devotion. He asked people to redress the misery of those in distress, to fulfil the needs of the helpless and to feed the hungry. In

these simple sayings, Chishti raised religion above the level of rituals and ecclesiastical formalities and service to humanity became its *raison d'être*

*Three* Generosity, affection and hospitability endear man to God This mystic morality struck at the very roots of parochialism, casteism and religious exclusiveness

The saints of the Chishti *silsilah* considered possession of property a serious impediment to the growth of one's spiritual personality They subsisted on *fatuh* (unasked for charity) and inexpensive clothes and other necessities Many, including Chishti, had no house of their own and lived under conditions of poverty They considered fasting an effective expedient for weakening desire which created further desire and disillusionment They reduced their diet to control the calls of the flesh All this was more than preaching Chishti acted on whatever he preached and led a simple and unostentatious life

Khwaja Moinuddin did not favour association with the king or his court The Chishti saints cut themselves off completely from kings, courts, and government service They boldly said that the income of the Sultans was illegal, the atmosphere of the court life alien to the spirit of religion (Islam), the government employee an exploiting class and things connected with Government obnoxious symbols of materialism They, therefore, refused royalty's favours of jagirs, endowments and presents

It goes largely to the Khwaja's credit that his followers prevented the growth of Indo-Muslim society on the perverted ideology of the governing class and held aloft equality and brotherhood The Chishtis advised the Sultan to do justice and to ameliorate the conditions of the people Owing to the influence of the saints, some Indian Musalmans developed interest in mysticism, prayers and aloofness from the world But for these saints, the people might have suffered more at the hands of fanatic orthodoxy and political favouritism

#### Reading

Yusuf Husain      *Glances of Indian Culture*

## ihvacharya

(1199-1278) *It*

*lu), everything else depends on 'His*

*will' —Madhva*

*Shri Vasop*

**M**atter and soul, time and space are, according to Madhva-charya, the great Dvaita philosopher, subordinate to God. It is His will that has made them what they are, they exist by His will, are sustained by Him, and will be what He wills. He is the 'truth of truths'. It is this realization that enables man to distinguish between the real and the unreal (*satya* and *unrita*) and frees him from suffering and bondage. Madhva brings out this beautifully when he says

'If God were not the supreme, how come the world of matter and souls to be in His power

'If everything else were not in His power, how come that there is no eternal happiness all round for all of us here and now'

Madhva holds that God (Brahman), selves, and the world are distinct and exist permanently, but the latter two are subordinate to God and dependent on him. The Brahman is not a mere abstraction. He is a perfect ~~infinite~~ personality with a superior reasoning power which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe. Identified with Vishnu, He directs the world. He has distinctive characteristics that make Him different and distinguished from all that is dependant (*para-tantra*). Although His attributes are different from His essence, the personality of God and His attributes are one and the same. He is the inner ruler of all selves and is transcendent to the world as well as immanent in it. This Madhva calls 'unity in diversity' (*saimesha abheda*). According to Madhva's Dvaita, the self is of limited power and dependent on God and

therefore, not an absolute agent. By nature self is blissful, though it is subject to pain and suffering because of its connection with a material body due to its past *karma*. So long as it is not freed from impurities it wanders about in changing forms of existence. In Madhva's philosophy, no two selves are alike and salvation lies in the perpetuation of the individual self in the condition of release, where 'the self takes delight in adoration and worship of God'.

Madhva challenges Sankara's doctrine of *advaita* as also his concepts of *maya* (illusion) and the unity of God and soul. He holds that the world created by God is not *mithya* and *maya*, it is unlike the creations of a magician who is powerless to create, sustain and perceive real things.

Madhva teaches that humanity should work hard for its salvation. Work should be treated as worship of God and should be offered to Him in prayerful dedication (*Nishkama Karma Yoga*). Such *karma* is necessary for both the *Jnani* and the *sanyasin*. Further Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are not mutually exclusive. If Karmayoga is to be carried out, it has to be grounded on a right understanding of God and such knowledge has to be based on a sense of deep devotion (*bhakti*) to Him. Thus a true Karmayogi will have to be both *Jnani* and *Bhakta* at the same time. Karma-yoga is not a mechanical performance of duty without philosophical conviction in and devotion to God.

Madhva's greatness can be gauged from the fact that he was successful in winning over his own guru Achyuta Prakasha to his own thought of supremacy of Vishnu and the reality of the world. Many scholars of the time, for instance Tribhuvana Pandit, Sobhana Bhatt, Narahari Sastri allied themselves to Madhva's Dvaita. Madhva had an open mind and admitted to his fold many non-Brahmins. He placed faith above the accident of birth and showed tolerance of other faiths.

Madhva's works include *Sarvadarshanasangraha* and *Samkshepa Sankar Vyaya*, besides many short philosophical monographs, commentaries on the *Brahmasutras*, *Gita*, *Upanishads* and first 40 hymns of the *Rigveda*, an epitome on the Mahabharata and a gloss on the *Bhagavat Purana*. The small work on the *Rigveda* is of great importance in that it develops



and illustrates for the first time an *adhyatmic* (spiritual) interpretation of the hymns

Madhvacharya ranks with Sankara and Ramanuja, and the three are the principal Vedāntic philosophers. Madhva's duality goes beyond Ramanuja's Visistadvaita which had been successful in establishing the Vaishnava faith. In a way Madhva's Dvaita is a culmination of the movement of the Alvars and Nayanmars of the ninth century.

Madhva was born in 1199 in a village near Udipi in Karnataka. At a very early age he became proficient in Vedic learning and turned into a sanyasin. He was a disciple of Achyuta Prakasha, an adherent of Sankara's school, but developed his own philosophy and was able to bring round his guru to his own philosophical views. He converted a number of people to his faith and founded a temple for Krishna at Udipi which became a rallying centre for his followers. 'Prohibition of bloodshed in connection with sacrifices is a salutary reform for which he is responsible. He died in 1278 at the age of 79.

Reading

E. W. Cowell *Sarvadarshanasangraha*

# Jnanesvara

(1276-1297)

AN epistle in the form of a blank sheet of paper is most likely to evoke ridicule and be confined to the dustbin by the recipient. Probably not so for a saint for whom the blank sheet may have some meaning, at least for Jnanesvara, the thirteenth century Maharashtra saint-poet, it did. He was sitting with his two brothers, Nrvittinath and Sopandeva, and sister Mukta Bai when the epistle—a blank paper from one of the greatest contemporary saint Changadeva—was delivered to him. “In spite of years’ patience and practice, Changadeva is still blank”, was Mukta Bai’s reaction. Nrvittinath, however, viewed it differently. He said, ‘the blank sheet is an indication of Changadeva’s clean heart’. Jnanadeva replied to this letter in 64 verses which became famous as *Changadeva Pashtee*. Changadeva had sent the blank paper as he had not been able to make up his mind about the form of address for a person younger in age, whether to address him as ‘son’ or ‘guru’.

Changadeva, it is said, failed to grasp the meaning of Jnanesvara’s reply in verses and personally came to meet him. When the two, the youngman and the elderly yogi met, the latter was overwhelmed and wanted to be Jnanesvara’s disciple. At the young saint’s suggestion Changadeva was initiated into the mysteries of divinity by Mukta Bai. The medieval saints were concerned, more than anything else, with the meaning of God. Jnananath, which was the original name of Jnanesvara, thought that God was omnipresent but formless and that a guru played a vital role in attaining the goal. Though initiated to the Nath sect, he neither believed in the austerities of Hathyoga nor in the renunciation of the world. He believed in *nivratti* through *pravratti* and considered differentiation between creation and the creator an illusion, the world is real and conscious and not a mere illusion.

He established that Vaishnavism was suitable for social life

While only 19, he wrote Bhavartha-Dipika, popularly known as *Jnanesvari*, a commentary on the Gita. This was the most notable work in Marathi and is treated with reverence as a scripture. On the initiative of his elder brother he wrote Amritanubha in support of Sankara's philosophy of Advaita. *Jnanesvari* is in the form of *Kirtan*. Each of its verses consists of four lines constituting an *Oni* (metre). The work is more than a commentary in as much as the 700 verses of the Gita are explained in about 9000 verses. Jnanesvara expounds his own thoughts about the ways of salvation through the paths of knowledge, action and devotion and appeals to the intellect of the learned. He exhorts the simple to piety and, to carry the meaning home, cites illustrations from the Puranas.

Jnanesvara was born at Apegion near Paithan in Maharashtra in 1276 A.D. He was born of Vithalpant and Rukmani Bai and at a young age studied Hindu religion and philosophy. He came from a long line of spiritual teachers of the Nath sect and was initiated by brother Nrivittinath.

Jnanesvara's father was a deeply religious person and was initiated into the holy order by Ramananda. But when Ramananda came to know that the disciple had a family, he sent him back with the advice to fulfil first his family obligations. But when Vithalpant returned, the family was ostracised and forced to live outside the town. Socially unacceptable, the father was troubled and as expiation he drowned himself into the holy river. The mother also followed suit.

The four children were in destitute and for some time got a raw deal from the community. But in course of time they were recognised as having saintly qualities and Jnanadeva as possessing miraculous powers. People came to see him and hear his sermons. For a while they settled at Nevasa on the Godavari where Jnanesvara composed *Jnanesvari* besides many devotional songs. After a pilgrimage to some centres, they settled down at Alandi. On 25 October 1297 Jnanesvara took *samadhi* in front of Siddhesvar temple in the presence of a large gathering. The event has been vividly described by Namadeva. Within eight months of this, the other brothers and sister too passed away.

To the Varkari literature, Jnanesvara made notable con-

tribution Though not its founder, Jnanesvara is looked upon with reverence and considered the greatest leader by the followers of Varkari They go on pilgrimage to Pandharpur every year Besides Varkari, there were two other important religious sects in Maharashtra Mahanubhaya, which is devoted to Krishna's worship, and Nath which initiates disciples

#### Reading

Bahirat *The Philosophy of Jnanadeva*

R D Ranade *Mysticism in Maharashtra*

*Jnaneshvari* edited by H M Lambert (UNESCO Project)

# Nizamuddin Aulia

(1234-1325)

*If a man places thorns in your way, and you do the same, it will be thorns everywhere —Aulia*

**H**anaz Dilli Dur Ast—Delhi is far off This is one of the most commonly used expression (when the goal is distant) amongst Indians but few know its origin It is said that once while returning from campaign of Bengal Sultan Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, who was jealous of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia's great moral and spiritual influence, sent a word to the Aulia to leave Ghiaspur, his seat, because the Sultan apprehended trouble from Ulugh Khan and others that time sojourning with Aulia According to tradition Aulia's reaction to the message was 'Hanaz Dilli Dur Ast' The prophecy turned out true as the Sultan met an unexpected death before he could reach Delhi Delhi was far off

Another time Aulia heard of Sultan Jalaluddin's intention to visit him Aulia went away to Ajodhan and avoided meeting the Sultan When Sultan Alaaddin expressed a desire to visit Aulia, the latter's reaction was "There are two doors of my house If the Sultan comes by one door, I will quit by the other"

Nizamuddin Aulia was a disciple of Bakhtiar Kaki and in the line of disciples of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti While granting *khulafat nama* to Nizamuddin, Farid had instructed the recipient disciple to devote his life to the propagation of the Chishti mystic principles Aulia opened the door of his mystic principles and admitted all classes of people He enjoyed immense popularity and influence among them and also had their confidence If ever a disciple committed a sin, he confessed it before the saint and avowed allegiance anew Under Aulia, the Chishti *silsilah* reached its high watermark

Aulia laid great stress on the motive of love and devotion

# Amir Khusrau

[ 1253-1325 ]

Every pearl in the royal crown is but the crystallised drop of blood fallen from the tearful eyes of the poor peasant —*Khusrau*

**A**mir Khusrau was by profession a librarian. But the greatness of the Amir does not lie in his librarian's craftsmanship or art, nor even in his scholarship—it lies in his breaking the mistrust and isolation which honeycombed relations between the then existing various culture groups and paving the way for their reconciliation at the social and ideological levels. Such conciliation and concord amongst them was a moral and intellectual demand besides being an urgent social necessity. The broad and cosmopolitan outlook of the Sufis and mystics helped in this and Amir Khusrau was by far the most powerful exponent of the movement.

Khusrau, whose real name was Abul Hassan (he was also known by the name of Yaminuddin), was the son of Safuddin Mahmood, an Amir of Iltumish and grandson, on his mother's side, of a high official of Balban's court and of Indian origin. He was born at Patiali in the Etah district of Uttar Pradesh. His father, originally a resident of Balkh, district Hazara and said to have been the 'richest man of the place, came to India when Changez Khan cast his coveted eyes on Balkh. Khusrau's education initially started under his father's care but when he was only 8, the father brought the prodigal son and left him at the gate of Jamat Khana of Khwaja Hazarat Nizamuddin Aulia. Determined to enter, the boy composed and sent the following lines to the Aulia.

You are a king at the gate of whose palace  
A pigeon becomes a hawk  
A poor traveller who comes to your gate  
Either he enters or returns

After a few minutes, the story goes, Hazarat Nizammuddin sent a messenger to recite the following verse before the lad outside

Oh you the man of reality come inside,  
So you become for a while my confidant  
If the one who had entered is foolish,  
Then he should return the way he entered

Hearing this verse, the boy presented himself before the Hazarat who granted him discipleship

Later Khusrau rose to a high status because of his connections in political circles and had opportunities of observing many important events from close quarters. He was a man of learning and helped the growth of Muslim literary societies. He first rose to favour during the reign of Balban, was then court poet of Alauddin and later became the poet laureate of Ghiasuddin Tughlaq and received pension from the state. Jalaluddin appointed him as his librarian.

Khusrau wielded a facile pen and wrote five *diwans* and four historical masnavis but since history was not his primary concern, his descriptions contained much more than what could pass as history. His themes in Tughlaqnama are disjointed, he lacks the sense of historiography, his sequence of chronology leaves much to be desired, even his style is verbose. But in his defence a historian says, "The favourite of Nizamuddin Aulia was not a *Khuraqa posh darwesh* (wearer of Sufi garments made of patches), and we cannot expect him to have laid bare the character and motivation of the great ones of the time or to have disentangled in causal relations of human events. His primary concern was to demonstrate his literary ability, gain a lasting reputation and also to get reward for his literary performance. Religion, love of art and literature, search for beauty and fulfilment of economic needs by legitimate means were the dominant traits of Khusrau's life. Truly he wrote on historical topics but not because of any urge, he wrote either on the suggestion of or for presentation to reigning sovereigns. This would explain his eulogistic concern with virtues alone and skipping over all that was bad—of Alauddin and his successor in *Nuh Sipahr*. His letter to his daughter and accounts of Alauddin's Chittor expedition and of Malik Kafur's con-

which, he said, helped realisation of God. The motive of love, he preached, had a direct bearing on social justice and benevolence. Devotion to God could be either *lazmi* (obligatory)—prayer, fast, pilgrimage and recitation—and its benefits accrued to the devotee alone, or it could be *muta addi* (communicable)—spending money on others, showing affection and helpfulness to others—its benefits accrue to others but its rewards are endless. Aulia laid greater stress on *muta addi* and said that the entire knowledge was not equivalent to the detached service of mankind. Once Aulia said, "The only way to love and adore God was to love Him for the sake of human beings and to love human beings for the sake of God."

Aulia was a learned man and led a pious life. He kept himself aloof from the authorities and never visited any durbar of any Sultan. He felt God and mammon could not be served simultaneously. To his disciples he advised, 'One whose hands and feet moved at the royal bidding could not have a soul of his own,' and asked them to abstain from the services, favours and patronage of kings. People of various classes came to him. The mystic teacher soothed the excited nerves of people who were disgusted and frustrated or had their hearts torn by inner conflicts. He also integrated their personality to inner harmony.

It has been asked that if Aulia preached aloofness from courts or persons in authority, how was it that Amir Khusrau who spent all his life in courts and camps could be a cherished disciple of Aulia. In reply to this it is said that Aulia had personal regard and affection for Khusrau and that since a *khilafat-nama* was not given to Khusrau which alone could bar a disciple from government service, no principle was involved in this case.

The Aulia allowed discussions on spiritual matters but worldly issues were taboo. The disciples were encouraged to say their Chishti, Ishnaqi, Zawal and Tahajjud, besides their compulsory prayers.

In contrast to the Chishti saints were the Suhrawardy saints. Whereas the Chishtis laid stress on humaneness, the Suhrawardys did not detest material prosperity and were rigid in religious matters. Two instances are given here.

A visitor asked Nizamuddin Aulia. What should be the



ultimate end of a Hindu if he recited in private Kalimah, believed in the unity of God and acknowledged the prophethood of Mohammed, but kept silent when a Musalman comes. The Shaikh refused to pronounce any verdict on such a Hindu, saying that it was an affair between him and God who could punish him or forgive him.

Contrast this with another incident with Saiyed Jalaluddin Bakhan, of the Suhrawardy silsilah, who was on his death-bed. Naivahun, a daroga of Uchch, called on him and said, "May God restore your health. Your holiness is the last of the saints as the Prophet Mohammed was the last of the prophets". This was construed as an expression of faith in Islam and it was demanded of Naivahun to make a formal declaration of conversion. Naivahun declined. The matter was further pursued and Naivahun was declared an apostate. Permission was sought from Feroz for the execution of Naivahun and this was granted.

Aulia conducted his work of piety for 50 long years. His *dargah* at Delhi is visited by large crowds which shows the high regard in which he is held. Once the saint had said,

If some one visits a living man and gets nothing from him to eat, it is as if he had visited the dead. If the Chishti saints had nothing, they respectfully offered the visitor a bowl of water.

Nizamuddin was born at Badaun in U P in the year 634 A H. His parents Sayed Ahmed and Sayedah Bibi Zulaikha were simple, pious people. When he was young his father passed away. Consequently, the family led a very hard life. On the advice of Hazrat Najeerbuddin he went to Ajodhan where he received religious instructions from Baba Fardadudin. There are many legends of miracles associated with the name of Hazrat Nizamuddin. He died in 725 A H.

K K Nizami

Mohd Nur Niabi

Infan Habib

*Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during 13th Century*

*Development of Muslim Religious Thought in India from 12th to 14th Century*

*Historical Background of the Popular Movement in 15th & 16th Centuries*

quest of Warangal make interesting reading All told his works are not devoid of social and cultural import

Khusrau's genius unfolded itself in poetry, music and prose He could write with equal felicity in Persian and Hindi His poetry in Hindi is written in very simple language, akin to Khadi Boli His riddles are popular A sample is given here

A plate full of jewels  
Is upside down over the head  
Around does the plate rotate  
But not a jewel falls from it  
What is that ? The Sky

Amir Khusrau invented Khayal, Tarana, Qaul, Qulhana, Pahelian, Doha, Qawali etc and perhaps sitar too Khusrau was proud of being an Indian and gave ten reasons India was the best country in the world

Amir Khusrau was not merely a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin but they had mutual affection and attachment Farishta records that when Amir Khusrau was whipped on the orders of prince Sultan Khan, the marks of his whipping were left on the body of the Hazrat

Another interesting event relates to their death It is said that on learning of the sad passing away of his mentor, Khusrau hurried back from Bengal where he had accompanied Sultan Ghiasuddin Tughlaq Before his death, Hazrat Nizamuddin, knowing fully well of his disciple's love, had instructed people not to allow the Amir to come straight to his grave But Khusrau somehow reached the spot where Hazrat Nizamuddin lay buried Looking at the grave from a distance he recited the following *doha*

A maiden is sleeping on her bed  
Her face is covered with her hair  
Oh Khusrau go back home  
Dusk is falling around

Saying the *doha*, it is said, Khusrau breathed his last

# Ramananda

(1400-1470)

**B**hakti originated in the South, Ramananda brought it to the North and his disciple Kabir spread it all over’

The *Bhakti* cult emphasised the equality of religions, the unity of the godhead and simple devotion. The dignity of man, the man of devotion preached, depended on his action, and not on his birth. He even protested against the domination of priests. The foremost amongst these saints, in the order of spiritual attachment and also in point of time, was Ramananda, an independent thinker who gave the greatest impulse to the religious revival in North India.

Ramananda was born in a Brahmin family of learning. After his initial education he became a disciple of Raghavnanda, the swamy of a prosperous *math*. However on a point of difference with his guru, Ramananda left the *math*. He travelled through the holy places and renounced the rigidity of Hindu ritual. He preached to all classes of people and to both the sexes the worship of the eternal God in the form and name of Rama who alone could release man from the evils of transmigration. By *bhakti* of Rama a man could attain salvation, Ramananda said. His preaching in Hindi, the language of the people, brought him immense popularity and a large following. Twelve of his well known disciples came from different strata and castes. Raidas was a chamar, Kabir a Musalman weaver (Julaha), Dhanna a Jat, Sena a barber, Pipa a Rajput, Bhavananda, Ashananda, Sursurananda, Parmananda, Mahendra and Sri Ananda were other prominent disciples of Ramananda.

Ramananda had parted the company of his guru on a point of principle whether or not to restrict the devotional knowledge to some. Ramananda imparted devotional knowledge to all, irrespective of caste and creed. He was opposed

to casteism and was liberal in thought. He never thrust his views on others. He preached that for a devotee of God the tie of caste was superfluous and that the devotee should not bother about these artificial differences, say of food and drink. He said if families could have their *gotras* after sages there was no reason why people could not be identified after God who is worshipped by sages? Obviously the fraternity of mankind is a truth and they all belong to just one caste. The dignity of man lay not in his birth in a particular caste but in his deeds, he preached.

Ramananda's disciples called themselves Avadhoots (the detached) for they regarded themselves free from all sorts of religious and social customs. In a hymn attributed to Ramananda, and appearing in the *Adigrantha* Ramananda declines an invitation to go and worship Vishnu in a temple because God being all pervasive, he had found Him in his heart. But from this it should not be inferred that Ramananda forbade the worship of images. He preached a faith in the reality of one personal God—spiritual and invisible—whom he named Rama. He did not break with image worship nor with mythology or caste. While it is true that he acknowledged attainment of release by the outcastes through *bhakti*, there is no evidence that Ramananda modified social rules of caste.

The teachings of Ramananda created amongst the Hindus two different schools. One school of Bhaktamili and Tulsidas and the other of Kabir. The former school did not favour a break with the tradition, but wanted to preserve the authority of the Vedas and worship Rama as the personal incarnation of the Supreme God. They gave importance to ethical purpose in life and raised the moral level of Hinduism. They purged the social life of the mystical sensuality inherent in the Krishna cult of Nimbarka, Vallabha and Chaitanya, and tried to remove the demoralising influence that had crept in because of Krishna cult.

The Bhakti movement made a tremendous impact on society. The leaders of the movement loosened the ties of the social fabric and raised their voice against social structure. This gave self respect to various so-called low professions. The political effect of this was not insignificant. It was because of the teachings and influence of these saints that later Gajend

Singh and Shivaji opposed the Moghuls and brought about the downfall of that empire. Because of the literary activities of the Bhaktas, religious literature in the local dialects got an impetus. Similarly translations, music and architecture received encouragement.

That was on the positive side. The *Bhakti* cult had some negative aspects also. Fake gurus and fakirs misused it. It is said that because of importance given to Krishna's amours people became licentious, and also that the idea of surrender sapped people's material strength and zest for living.

## Kumbha

(15th Century)

Rarely has the world seen in one man a combination of such qualities each of which would stamp a man great as in Kumbha. 'He was a great sovereign, a great military commander, a great builder, and a great scholar'

Kumbhakarna, or Kumbha, as he was popularly known, was the eldest son of Rana Mokal by his Parmar queen, Sobhagya Devi. He inherited the fine qualities of both his parents—chivalry of father and culture of mother. The elder Rana was well respected by his people but so touchy were they that a casual remark of his offended two of his otherwise loyal kinsmen, Chacha and Mahap, who treacherously murdered him in 1433. Though Kumbha's position became precarious, he succeeded in escaping on the fleetest horse to Chittor and later brought things under his control.

The assailants then took shelter with Sultan Mahmud Khilji of Malwa whom Kumbha asked to surrender the culprits. The Sultan's refusal led to war between the two in 1437 at Sarangpur in which the Khilji was routed. He fled and took shelter in his fort at Mandu. But the Maharana's forces pursued the enemy and made the Sultan captive. He was brought and imprisoned in the fort of Chittor. The next year to celebrate the victory, the Maharana built the famous Jai Stambha—tower of victory—at Chittor.

However as an act of chivalry, Kumbha not only freed the Sultan but also set him on the throne of Mandu. But this generosity proved politically unwise because the Sultan, to avenge himself of the humiliation, made an alliance with Gujarat, another of Kumbha's rival and enemy. Had Kumbha annexed Malwa to his kingdom, he might have escaped the future wars as also should have made his power stronger. The ungrateful Sultan fought five battles against the Maharana but

he was successively defeated. The Sultan entered into alliance with his former foe, the Sultan of Gujarat and their two armies attacked the Maharana. But even the combined forces suffered defeat

The obvious course for the Maharana was to strengthen his defences, to which he now devoted himself. He erected several strategic forts and weaned out from his army people not very loyal to him, including Rathods who had turned arrogant and even killed Kumbha's uncle. Marwar was annexed in 1438. Later Jodhe Rathod placated the Maharana by marrying his daughter to Maharana's son, Rajmal

Of his valour Todd writes, "He triumphed over the enemies of his race, fortified his country with strongholds, embellished it with temples and with the superstructure of her fame laid the foundations of his own" The Maharana was a great builder. He built the famous temples of Kumbhalswami, Ranpur and Eklingji and excavated many tanks. The greatest monument of Kumbha's military and constructive genius is the wonderful fortress of Kumbhalgarh to which Ranas turned whenever Udaipur became unsafe and Chittor untenable. The Kirti Stambha (tower of victory) is a monument of his genius. The 128 feet high 9-storeyed tower was constructed by the Maharana at a cost of Rs 9 million. The architect Jaitra and his son Nepa and Punja took four years to complete it. 'The only thing in India comparable to this is the Kutb Minar at Delhi which though much higher is of an inferior character', wrote Todd about it.

Kumbha was, besides being a great warrior and builder, a notable poet and scholar. He wrote many poems, composed dramas, annotated earlier poems and wrote treatises on 'Music'. Kumbha's commentary '*Rasik Priya*' on *Gita Govinda* shows his scholarship. Kumbha valued men of learning, showed them respect and appreciated their work. Atri and Mahesh, the composers, benefited from his patronage. He encouraged books on architecture. Under his patronage, his architect Mandan wrote eight books on architecture and sculpture. A large number of inscriptions and coins in gold, silver and copper struck in his time have since been found.

Kumbha was no doubt the most powerful king of his time. But it is true that he, like other Rajputs, failed to restore

Rajput supremacy in upper India and to free Western India from the tyranny of foreign adventurers and to save the country from being subjected to foreign domination This happened because of lack of political consciousness and foresight amongst the Rajputs

Kumbha reigned for 35 years In 1468 he was stabbed to death, treacherously, by prince Uday Singh

Reading

Premlata Sharma *Sangitaraja*



# Bammera Potana

(1400-1475)

In the times of Bammera Potana, the famous Telugu poet and translator-author of *Bhagavatam*, it was a fashion with the kings to seek dedication of art works from their creators—artists, poets and others. And, for the latter the luxuries of the court life and gifts of land and wealth were temptation enough to comply with the royal wish. But once in a way there would be a pious poet who, considering the court life a sacrilege, refused to dedicate his work to the king. For the ruler, resort to force was the next step and, if that too failed, torture was tried. Perhaps the most poignant example of the poet so persecuted was that of Bammera Potana's who refused to dedicate his *Bhagavatam* 'to a mere human being and offered it to Rama'.

Potana's *Bhagavatam* is much longer and his descriptions larger than the original work in Sanskrit. His flight of imagination soars even higher. His language is sweet and his verses are sung in the early dawn in *Ananda Bhairava Rag*. He is unsurpassable in devotional inspiration and emotional intensity. The *Bhagavatam* is so popular that scholars and illiterates alike recite its verses. His stories of the liberation of Gajendra, marriage of Rukmini and safety of Prahlad are very popular.

Potana was not only a great devotee and scholar but also a rare wit. It is recorded that one day his brother-in-law Srinatha, a poet of repute, came across a passage in Potana's *Bhagavatam* in which Vishnu on hearing a prayer of Gajendra in distress rushes to save His devotee. In a hurry he descended on the earth without even arming himself with any weapon. Srinatha asked Potana caustically whether Vishnu had gone to Gajendra only to weep with him. Potana heard this sarcastic remark but kept quite. After sometime one day when Srinatha was taking his food, Potana played a fast one on

him. He hid Srinatha's son, threw a big stone into an adjoining well and told Srinatha that his son had fallen into the well. Srinatha at once left the food and ran to the well. He was wringing his hands and running around the well, without giving a thought as to what he should do. Potana then revealed the truth and told Srinatha that Vishnu loved His devotee as intensely as Srinatha loved his son and that His anxiety for the devotee's life had hurriedly brought Himself to the devotee's rescue without any thought of arming Himself.

For his purity, integrity and independence Potana was a striking contrast to Srinatha who 'basked in the sun-shine of royal favour, knew how to turn rhyme into rupees'. Potana on the other hand avoided kings and courts and preferred poverty with honour to wealth. 'He spurned to wed the damsel of poetry to wretched kings for money'. Srinatha was a courtier, Potana a devotee. Srinatha did try to induce Potana to befriend the 'mammon of unrighteousness'. However, Potana preferred to live and die a poor man and disdained to bow his knee to kings 'while he had Siva to worship and Vishnu to celebrate'.

Potana's life was devoted to the translation of *Bhagavatam*. He was disgusted with the worldliness of his times and concluded that the public were unworthy of hearing his poems. He left the *Bhagavatam* as a heritage to his son Mallana with instructions to give the sacred book to a man, pure and devoted. The son true to his father did not even open the box in which the *Bhagavatam* was deposited and bequeathed it to his friend Narayya. The latter discovered that portions of the great work had been destroyed by worms, and he completed these with the assistance of a friend of his.

As an inspirational poet Potana is not excelled by any other Telugu poet and his *Bhagavatam* is regarded as a standard manual of devotion.

Potana was self made and self educated. He appears to have had no formal schooling which would account for some minor defects of language and composition in the *Bhagavatam*. Different places claim the honour of being his birth place. It is not certain whether he came from Warangal or Outimutta in Cuddappah.

A legend surrounds Potana that one day while he was

grazing cattle, he met a yogi named Jitānanda through whose blessings Potana obtained his intellectual awakening and the gift of poetry. While young he was gay and was in favour with Rao Singama and composed a rhapsody called *Bhogini Dandaka* on the king's concubine. Later he turned very sober. He was a Saivite and atoned for narrating the incident of Daksha's sacrifice in which Siva had used words of contumely by writing *Virabhadra Vijaya* in praise of Siva. It is also said that one day Potana was engaged in composing the *Bhagavatam* and he could not get the right line to finish a verse. He left the manuscript with his daughter and went out. But on his return, he found much to his surprise the line had been completed by the daughter.

## Raidas

(15th Century)

'God is everywhere in you and me'

'To recognise oneself is to reach the Almighty'

'Irrespective of caste and creed all are equal in the eyes of God and only sinful actions bring bad name and dishonour to man —*Raidas*

**R**avidas, or Raidas as he was popularly known, preached love of God and religious harmony as the only panacea for the survival of humanity in the fifteenth century. He did not believe in idol-worship and emphasised the search for truth and realisation of the oneness of God. Raidas composed many *sabads* in which he expressed his ideas. In each of these he advocates '*Ram Nam Jap*' and extols the efficacy of the *mantra* as the only remedy for salvation. As many as 41 of his *sabads* find place in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Raidas was born in a so-called low caste charmkar family at Varanasi. His father's name was Santokh Das and mother's Kalsi Devi. He had no formal education, but even as a child he was often found engaged in meditation for hours at a time. Later he inherited from his father the cobbler's profession, a work pretty hard and with poor returns. But he was not greedy and would make just a pair of shoes a day, sufficient for a living. Yet he was generous and if he found a poor man in need of shoes, he gave these to him free. He led a life of faith and devotion and considered service to man as service to God.

Because of his birth in a low-caste, Raidas had to face many ordeals in life. He was denied entry in temples and there are many legends how he proved his saintliness. Raidas, it is said, made his Sila (cobblers' stone) float on the Ganga which changed its course to accommodate Raidas when orthodox Hindus objected to his performing last rites at her banks.

Raidas was a disciple of Ramananda and had a large

following Raja Nagar Mal was one of Raidas's followers. Mira Bai had great respect for him. Sikandar Lodi, it is said, was impressed by his saintliness and teachings and honoured him with presents. Kabir too had a high regard for Raidas. Once when asked on a point about Brahma, Kabir replied

'I was a child and have crossed over the hazardous path in the lap of my mother. Go and enquire of Raidas, he is older and while he was crossing, the mother even placed a load on his head. He can provide correct guidance—'

Ravidas proved that "irrespective of caste and creed all are equal in the eyes of God and only sinful actions bring bad name and dishonour to a man"

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# Nanak`

(1469-1539)

Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, made no distinction between man and man. He propounded there is no Hindu, there is no Musalman. He opposed the caste system and untouchability and preached the religion of love and unity. He believed in one God and asked people to work for His attainment. But for this, he neither prescribed for peoples to go unworldly nor taking retirement from life. In those days, it was hazardous to hold such views. Nanak not only held and preached but acted on such ideas also.

Nanak was born on 23 November 1469, the Poonima (full moon) day of Kartik at Talwandi, also known as Nankana Sahib, now in Pakistan. Nanak's father's name was Kalu and mother's Tripta. At an early age Nanak was sent to school but instead of learning from teachers, he posed to them questions too mature for his age. He talked of God and life, courted the society of religious men and often retired to forest where he engaged himself in philosophical problems. Disturbed by Nanak's other-worldliness, his parents married him while he was only 14 to Sulakhna, daughter of Mula of Batala. But even this and other efforts failed in putting Nanak to practical pursuits, on the contrary he spent most of his time in reverie and dreams. While his family and relations disapproved of this, it pleased Rai Bular, the nobleman of Talwandi who developed a genuine respect for Nanak's other-worldliness.

Unable to put his son in any profession, Kalu sent Nanak with a companion, named Bala, to Sultanpur to take up a job under Daulat Khan and for a few years Nanak led a regular life, although he did not altogether discontinue his other-worldly pursuits. He would keep aside part of his earnings for his and his family's needs and give away the rest to the poor. Music was another hobby that absorbed Nanak's time. Yet all

this could not continue for long and one day Nanak renounced the world. His companion Bala failed to dissuade Nanak and returned to Talwandi. But another person, Mardana, who had come about this time to Sultanpur to wean away Nanak, instead of converting the latter, was himself converted and became Nanak's disciple and decided to spend the rest of his life with him. He was for long Nanak's companion and went far and wide with him.

Guru Nanak went five times on travels (known as *udasis* i.e. journeys in retired life) about the country and to many foreign lands in which many persons became followers of his views. Even a thug named Sajjan Singh was so much affected from his advice that he gave up the evil life and started leading a clean life. He made no distinction between castes nor between poor and rich. It is said he preferred the poor carpenter's food to the rich man's feast. He mocked at irrational practices and brought home the truth to people by unusual methods. At Hardwar, he splashed water in the direction of his fields thereby mocking at those who were throwing water to reach their dead relatives.

After his last *udasi* he settled with his family at Kartarpur on the banks of the Beas. Later it was here that the customs of congregation and langar which played a great role in creating the nationalist spirit, were evolved. At the age of 70 Nanak breathed his last and his body was laid under a white sheet. It is said both Hindus and Muslims placed flowers on it and claimed the body. However, when the white sheet was removed, to every body's surprise, there was nothing to be found except the flowers. Each one took a flower.

Unity and fraternity, these are the two basic tenets of Nanak's philosophy. He preached equality of mankind and universal brotherhood. He said there is only one God who is indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all-pervading. Sikhism lays stress on moral duties and believes in karma and transmigration.

Nanak praised the religion of the Musalmans, as well as the *avatars* and the divinities of the Hindus. But he denied their descent from heaven. Guru Nanak states, 'A hundred thousand of Mohammeds, a million Brahmas, Vishnus, and a hundred thousand Ramas stand at the gate of the Most Exalted

These all perish, God alone is immortal " Nanak did not condemn scriptures but he condemned scripturalism, idol worship, rites and rituals. He spoke of the futility of pilgrimages and said that one could reach God through bhakti which involves nam jaap. For him nam jap was more than repetition of name; it meant purity of mind and body, meditation, silence, good action, concentration of mind, contentment and patience, faith and reverence, satsang (company of holy men) etc. Despite all this, one can attain God provided He is pleased with the devotee and the solution to this lies in the latter's complete surrender to Him. In this Guru plays an important part as he teaches the killing of self-ego. One of Nanak's famous compositions is the jaapji, a collection of verses which he arranged for the daily use in praise and prayer by his followers.

Guru Nanak appeared on the Indian firmament at a time when the people's morale was at the lowest ebb. They had no will or strength to fight oppression. It was Guru Nanak's inspiring hymns that brought to them a message of hope. Nanak revolutionised the religion and thought of his time.

#### A verse from *Jaapji*

There is no limit to God's praises, to those who repeat there is no limit

There is no limit to His mercy and to His gifts there is no limit

There is no limit to what God seeth no limit to what He heareth

The limit of the secret of His heart cannot be known

The limit of His creation cannot be known, neither His near nor His far side can be discovered

To know His limits how many vex their hearts His limits cannot be ascertained

Nobody knoweth His limits

The more we say the more there remains to be said

Great is the Lord and exalted is His seat

His exalted name is higher than the most exalted

Were any one else ever so exalted

Then He would know that exalted being,

How great He is He knoweth Himself

Nanak, God bestoweth gifts on whom He looketh with favour



# Kabir

(1440-1519)

O servant, where dost thou seek me ?  
Lo ! I am beside thee.  
I am neither in temple nor in mosque,  
I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash  
Neither am I in rites and ceremonies  
Nor in yoga and renunciation  
If thou art a true seeker,  
Thou shalt at once see me  
Thou shalt meet me in a moment of time  
Kabir says, "O Sadhu !  
God is the breath of all"

What use such rites and rituals as create disharmony and dissension amongst their followers—Hindus and Musalmans ? They are made of the same material—clay The caste differences too are useless Every one who worships Hari, belongs to Him All outward signs and external observances too are of no avail The true path to salvation lies in total surrender to God Kabir preached love and unity amongst all classes of people and laid stress on spiritual life

Kabir tried to reconcile religious differences He admired whatever was good in Hinduism and Islam and focused attention on bringing about harmony—social and religious—between man and man His effort was at affecting fusion of Islamic mysticism and Vedic traditions He vehemently opposed whatever came in conflict with these ideals of his

Kabir detested the sacerdotal spirit amongst Brahmins and Ulemas alike He opposed the superstitions perpetrated by them He cast doubts on the authority of the Vedas, opposed idolatry and rejected the doctrine of incarnation He also criticised asceticism, fasting, pilgrimage, ceremonial ablutions and denounced all dogmatism Reason was a guide for him, and this he supplemented to his devotion Kabir believed

in non duality and had no faith in the existence of difference between the devotee and God, and for this he suggested the guidance of Guru. Yet Kabir had no regard for those who professed or claimed to possess exclusive knowledge of the truth and of the true God. He asserted that the different appellations of God, e.g. Rama, Khuda are the expressions of one and the same truth. Kabir pertinently asks—

Brother ! From where have two masters of the universe  
come ?

Tell me who has invented the names of Allah Rama Krishna,  
Hari, Hazrat ?

Who is a Hindu ? Who is a Turk ?

Both inhabit the same earth

One reads the Vedas, the other the Koran and khutba

One is a Maulana, the other a Pundit

} They are like earthen vessels having different names but made  
of the same earth

Both are misled and have not found God

The external forces conceal from the eyes the deep meaning  
of existence ,

True faith resides in the heart

Kabir's unorthodox, robust and progressive approach affected the current and future religious and social fabric. Nanak was greatly influenced by Kabir's ideas and the *Adi Grantha* recognises him as a Mahatma and contains many of his verses. Kabir's ideas proved effective because they were written in simple language and were addressed to the people rather than to any professional religious class. He employed images drawn from the common life to drive home his convictions of the reality of the intercourse of the soul with the transcendent.

When the body is burnt, it becometh ashes,

When it is not burnt, a host of worms eat it up

A soft clay vessel will break when water is put into it such  
is the nature of the body

Why, O brother, goest thou about puffing and blowing  
thyself out ?

How hast thou forgotten the ten months thou didst remain  
inverted in the womb ?

As the bee collecteth honey with great zest, so the fool  
collecteth wealth

When a man is dead, they say, "Take him away ! take him away !

Why allow a ghost to remain ?"

His wedded wife accompanieth him to the door, and after that his male friends.

All the other members of his family go as far as the cremation ground ; the soul departeth alone.

Saith Kabir, hear, O mortals, they who have entangled themselves with the deceitful world,

Are seized by death, and fall into the pit like the parrot deceived by the trap.

Kabir, the legend goes, was born of a Hindu widow who in order to conceal her shame left the infant near a tank at Kashi. The infant was discovered and brought up by a Muslim weaver couple, Niru and Nima. He grew up in Muslim surroundings. Contacts with Sufi saints developed humanism in him. He also familiarised himself with Hindu thought and the sacred books. Through a stratagem he became a disciple of Ramananda but later he went beyond the teachings of his master. His verses are very boldly told :

Long not for a dwelling in heaven,  
and fear not to dwell in hell .

What will be, will be ;

O my soul, hope not at all

Sing the praises of God

From whom the supreme reward is obtained

What is devotion, what penance and austerity,

What fasting and ablutions,

Unless thou knowest the way to love and serve God ?

Be not glad at the sight of prosperity and

Grieve not at the sight of adversity ;

As is prosperity so is adversity ,

What God proposeth shall be accomplished

Saith Kabir, through the saints I now

Know in my heart

That the worshipper in whose heart

God dwelteth, performeth the best worship

Kabir welcomed anyone who shared his views. Thus he established a band of disciples to propagate his thoughts. His disciple Bhagodas compiled the saint's poems in *Bijak* i.e. a document with the help of which a hidden treasure can be located.

It is said that when Kabir died at Magahar in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh, both Hindus and Musalmans claimed the body for disposal according to their own rites ; but to their surprise when the covering sheet was removed the corpse was found missing.

Kabir is one of the greatest thinkers of India He uplifted the status of the down-trodden But he never intended to found a religion as happened after his death—a Kabir Panth was set up But Kabir's son declined to be a party to the idea of following a sect The son asserted that his father had all his life opposed sects and it won't be fair for him to join one Thus arose the proverb

An unlucky family was Kabir's  
In which the son Kamal was born

Reading

Hazari Prasad Dwivedi Kabir (Hindi)

# Chaitanya

(1486-1533)

*I too shall cross the terrible and dark ocean of the world  
by serving the lotus feet of Mukunda, the Supreme Lord,  
as did the sages of yore*

‘Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna’ such a chant is now not unfamiliar even in the West, leave alone India where it originated some four centuries back. It flowed from the heart of Chaitanya and instantly made a wide and profound influence on the masses drawn from the various strata of society, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. ‘Krishna consciousness’ is a continuation of Chaitanya’s teachings in the West and *namasankirtana*—chanting of names—a country-wide phenomenon in India.

Chaitanya preached faith in Hari and pure love and devotion to Krishna and Radha and gave the guru an important role in the realisation of Hari by the disciple. ‘If a creature adores Krishna and serves the guru he is released from the meshes of illusion and attains to Krishna’s feet’, Chaitanya said. Love and devotion, and song and dance produce a state of ecstasy in which the personal influence of God can be realised. This does not require any priestly intervention. Chaitanya’s faith has been enunciated in his *Sikshasatak* in eight verses. This is the only writing attributed to him. The philosophy propounded by him is termed *Achintya Bhedabheda* or incomprehensible dualistic monism.

‘Chaitanya’, the name that Vishvambhara (also known as Nimal and Gauranga) adopted on renunciation of family life, is acclaimed as one of the greatest and most popular Vaishnavite saints.

Chaitanya was born at Navadvipa (Nadia in Bengal) in 1486 on a full moon day in a poor but learned Brahmin family.

His father Jagannath Misra of Sylhet (mother's name was Sachi) was a disciple of Advaita Acharya, a learned, religious and influential pundit. This influenced the young Chaitanya. His elder brother Vishwarup became a sanyasi at an early age which troubled his parents and within a few years his father died. Chaitanya, however, fared well at school. He displayed a wonderful literary acumen, especially in grammar and rhetorics. At the age of 16 he started a school under the patronage of one Mukunda. About this time he was married to Lakshmi. His second marriage, on his first wife's death, influenced the course of his life. This lady named Vishnupriya came from an influential family of Navadvipa. Shortly after their marriage, Chaitanya went in 1508 to Gaya to perform the last rites of his father and there he took initiation from Ishwar Puri whom he had earlier met at Navadvipa. On return to Navadvipa, Chaitanya was accepted as the leader of the Vaishnavas. Very often he would be in a state of *samadhi*. The Vaishnavas muttered the names of Krishna and Vishnu, they also sang and danced together. Chaitanya gave this an orderly form and this is how *samkirtan* and Chaitanya-sampradaya started in 1509. Everybody, irrespective of caste or qualification, could join in the *kirtan*.

*Namasamkirtan* proved quite popular and soon it spread amongst the masses and drew crowds. From the houses it spread to the bazars. This was to the dislike of the local Kazi who resented the public chanting. But when a crowd surged, the Kazi thought it wise and withdrew, he realised that it was all a religious matter and had no political overtones. Respected by the people, Chaitanya renounced the world at the age of 24 and he became a sanyasin. He was initiated by Keshav Bharati at Katwa and took the name Srikrishna Chaitanya. He spent the rest of his life in preaching the message of love and devotion. For 18 years he was in Orissa and for six years in the Deccan, Vrindavan, Gaur and other places. At Puri, Sarvabhaum, the erudite Advaita scholar was the first to be Chaitanya's disciple. To the former, who insisted on Advaitic interpretation, Chaitanya explained his cult of devotion.

|| From Brahman the universe originates, it lives in Brahman and merges into Him on dissolution. He is related to the world in three attributive cases, ablative, instrumental and

locative These three attributes particularise Brahman as 'qualified' When he desires to be many, he looks at his *prakṛiti*

In his essential nature Ishwara is the plenitude of *sat* (existence), *chit* (consciousness) and *ananda* (bliss) The difference between Ishwara and *jiva* is that He is the lord of *maya*, while the latter is controlled by *maya* Creation is not false, it is transitory The words *tat tvam asi* represent partial truth' Finally Chaitanya said, the Vedas establish three propositions namely, Bhagavan is the object of substantiation, *bhakti* is the duty and love is the need The exposition silenced Sarvabhauma and he became a convert to Chaitanya's views

From Puri Chaitanya proceeded to the South At Rajamundry he met Ramananda-rayā who presented the philosophical background of Radha cult and *rasa* theory, the two pillars of Gaudiya Vaishnavism Then on to Rameshivaram and Kerala and thence northward to Gujarat, wherefrom he returned to Puri A few years afterwards he visited Varanasi, Prayag and Brij Bhumi and wherever he went he propagated Vaishnavism On his return to Puri he left the place only once on a visit to Bengal His disciples carried on the work in Navadvipa and at Vrindaban He elevated Vrindavan from the scene of Krishna's early manifestation to the position of earthly paradise

Chaitanya had a mysterious end How? No one knows

Chaitanya had even some Musalman followers But it is surprising that he never 'ate anything cooked by a non-Brahmin' Some people have criticised Chaitanya for having made Hindus non martial which led to the weakening and downfall of several Hindu kings This however would be to oversimplify and the criticism appears unjustified But let it not be forgotten that it was Chaitanya's influence that the ritualistic sacrifices of animals and strong drinks in the performance of religious rites were abolished in Bengal Mazumdar says

Chaitanya ushered in a new era in Bengal and laid the basis for modern Bengali culture He was an apostle of love but also of basic human dignity, to whom humility was as natural as an iron will

Reading

A. K. Mazumdar *Chaitanya His Life and Doctrine*

# Malik Mohammed Jayasi

(1493-1542)

Jayasi was profoundly affected by Kabir's teachings. While

Kabir had tried to create cordial relations between the Hindus and Musalmans on a national basis, Jayasi tried to achieve the same end through his poetry of love. He was well acquainted with Hindu folklore which he wrote in their language—Hindi.

He wrote three books, two of which—*Padmavat* and *Akhravat* are famous. In *Padmavat* (written between 1520 and 1540) he tells the story of a certain Ratan Sen who hearing from a parrot of the beauty of Padmavati or Padmini, journeyed to Ceylon as a mendicant and returned to Chittor with Padmini as his bride. Alaaddin, the ruling sovereign of Delhi, also heard of Padmini and endeavoured to capture Chittor so as to gain possession of her. In this he was unsuccessful but Ratan Sen was deceitfully taken prisoner and held as a hostage for her surrender. Padmini tactfully arranged his release from captivity by the bravery of two heroes. Ratan Sen then attacked king Dev Pal who had made insulting proposals to Padmini during his imprisonment. Dev Pal was killed, but Ratan Sen, as he was mortally wounded, returned to Chittor only to die. His two wives, one of them Padmini, sacrificed themselves on the pyre. Meanwhile Alaaddin appeared at the gates of Chittor and, though it was bravely defended, succeeded in capturing it.

At the end of the poem Jayasi explains it all as an allegory in which Chittor is the body of man, Ratan Sen the soul, Padmini wisdom, Alaaddin decision, the parrot the guru and so on, and thus a religious character is given to the story. The poem is based on the siege of Chittor in 1303 but Jayasi has modified the details.

*Padmavat* shows Jayasi's deep knowledge and approach



both in spiritual and material spheres. It is a mixture of fact and imagination.

Jayasi was a disciple of the Sufi saint Saikh Moimuddin and lived at Jayasi by which name he came to be known. He was honoured by the Raja of Amethi who attributed the birth of a son to the saint's blessings. Jayasi's tomb is still to be seen at Amethi.

Jayasi was deformed, one-eyed and ugly in looks. It is said that Sher Shah Suri laughed when he saw Jayasi. Jayasi's retort was quick, "Why laugh at me, laugh at the Almighty who has created me."

# Sher Shah Suri

(1486-1545)

No Government, not even the British, has shown so much wisdom as the Pathans —Keene

The Pathans referred to by Keene were those of the regime of Sher Shah, a striking personality in the history of India. His career is fascinating. By virtue of sheer ability, he rose from a lowly position to be one of the ablest rulers that India has produced.

Sher Shah, named Farid in early life, was born as the son of Hasan, an Afghan of the Sur tribe. He passed through various trials and vicissitudes of fortune before he rose to prominence. After short sojourns at Sasaram and Agra—and for a short while in Babur's army too—he joined Jalal Khan of Bihar as his Deputy Governor and guardian. But soon he became the virtual head of the government which made the other Afghan chiefs and the king of Bengal jealous of him. They entered into an alliance and resisted the rise of Sher Shah. But in 1534 Sher Shah defeated their forces.

But for this victory, the "Jagirdar of Sasaram (Sher Shah) would have never emerged from his obscurity into the arena of politics to run a race for empire." He became the indisputable leader of Bihar and after a little while tried to annex Gaur also. This aroused the Moghul anger and Humayun marched towards Bengal. Sher Shah avoided a direct contest, blocked the route of return of the Moghul army at Chausa and gave the enemy a crushing defeat. With great difficulty Humayun could save his life through the assistance of a water-carrier. Sher Shah gave the Moghuls yet another defeat at Kanauj. Humayun made another escape.

Indisputably in the possession of territories earlier held by the Moghuls, Sher Shah shifted his capital to Delhi and took Punjab, Marwar, Malwa, and Kalinjar, where he died.

in 1545 from an explosion of gunpowder

Sher Shah was not only a successful warrior but also a man of learning and an architect of a brilliant administrative system. During the short span of his rule of five years he introduced postal system and reorganised the army. Deeply interested in the welfare of his subjects, especially the exploited peasantry, Sher Shah defined the rights and liabilities of the tenants. He got the lands surveyed and settled land revenue at the rate of one-fourth to one-third of produce direct with the cultivators. The revenue officers were instructed to be lenient in assessment but strict in realisation. But in case of insufficient rains or encampment of soldiers, rents were waived and loans advanced. All this proved beneficial to the people and at the same time it also increased the revenue of the state. These reforms served as model for future agrarian reforms. Erskine says of him "He had more of the spirit of a legislator, a guardian of his people than any prince before Akbar."

Sher Shah introduced Rupiya and surprisingly his coins bore inscription "Shri Shersshahi" in Persian and Devanagari. Tariff reforms also helped improve trade and commerce and the economic conditions of the people. For improving communication, he built several roads, one from Sonargaon to the Indus, running into 1500 miles. The roads had on either side shaded trees and *sarais* for the travellers. It is said, "Such was the state of society that if anyone carried a purse full of gold and slept in desert for the night, there was no need to keep vigil. Sher Shah had a strong sense of justice and treated Hindus with tolerance. His attitude towards Hindus was not of contemptuous sufferance but of respectful deference."

Sher Shah maintained a strong army. He enforced strong discipline among soldiers and to root out corruption ensured that they were regularly paid. He applied indefatigable industry to the service of the state and to the interests of the people. Sher Shah's military character was marked by a rare combination of caution and enterprise, his political conduct was just and human, his religious attitude free from medieval bigotry.

To have achieved so much within a short span of five years is a measure of Sher Shah's greatness.

# Krishnadeva Raya

(15-16th Centuries)

A great emperor in the tradition of Asoka, Chandragupta, Harsha and Bhoja

**K**rishnadeva Raya, the emperor of Vijayanagar was a gallant and successful warrior. The area under his control exceeded that of the empire of Delhi.

On succeeding his elder brother Vir Narsimha Krishnadeva first suppressed the feudatories of his empire and then his great rivals in the north. His military conquests enabled him to humble the pride of his northern foes and to extend the limits of his empire. From Bijapur he took the Richur district and raged the Gulbarga fortress to ground. From Orissa Gajapati he recovered the territories that his predecessors had lost and in the battles he captured the royal princes and nobles. But he was a great statesman. Instead of confining the princes to the jail, he made use of their talents for administration. He appointed one of the princes as the governor of a province. This won him their loyalty and proved a diplomatic success.

Krishnadeva maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese and granted them concessions since 'he benefited largely by the import of horses and other requisites'. Paes the Portuguese traveller, said

He is the most learned and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry, he is the one who seeks to honour the foreigners and receives them kindly, asking all about their affairs whatever their condition may be. He is a great ruler and a man of much justice, but subject to certain fits of rage. He is by rank a greater lord than any.

Krishnadeva also devoted attention to the organization and administration of the empire. He administered the country directly, commanded the army in person and toured his ter-

territories incessantly. The Vijayanagar empire rose to the zenith of its glory and prosperity during Krishnadeva's reign. He was liberal and employed followers of other religions in his army.

Krishnadeva's reign not only marked the climax in the territorial expansion but it was also remarkable for the encouragement and development of art and letters. He also ushered in a new era of literary activity in South India. He was a generous patron of learning and gathered around him poets, philosophers and religious teachers whom he honoured with magnificent gifts of land and wealth. In his court flourished the *ashta diggajas* (eight great poets) who did pioneering work in Telugu. Peddana, one of the fathers of Telugu, was his poet laureate.

Krishnadeva himself was an accomplished scholar, musician and poet. Besides some Sanskrit works, he wrote his classic work *Amuktamalyada* in Telugu.

Art, architecture, painting and music also received encouragement from Krishnadeva. He built and endowed magnificent temples and gave charities liberally. The famous Hazara temple built during his reign is 'one of the most perfect specimens of Hindu architecture in existence'. He was proficient in music and some new works of music were produced during his time.

For all these qualities Krishnadeva has rightly been called one of the greatest emperors of India and classed with Asoka, Chandragupta and Harsha.

#### Reading

N V Ramanayya *Vijayanagar—Origin of the City and Empire*

# Sankardeva

(1449-1569)

There is only one God,  
There is only one devotion,  
And there is none but one

The above is a saying of Sankardeva, the 15th century leader of the Vaishnavite movement of Assam, who reintegrated Assam in the cultural and religious life of India. Earlier for about two centuries Assam had been under the subjugation of Ahom kings under whose rule the Ahom impact had swept off the Indian culture. About this time Saktism and Buddhism too had degenerated and people longed for a new liberal religion. Sankardeva rationalised religious attitudes and filled in the lacunae with his Vedantism of one God. His liberal thought helped spread his ideas and opened a new chapter of religious renaissance. His gospel converted even the Kutch king.

Sankardeva's Vaishnavism is known as *Ek Saran Dharma*, i.e., devotion to one God with its four fold cardinal features: *Sravan Kirtan* (listening to devotional songs), *Dasya* (placing at the services of God), democratic approach that is making no distinction of caste or creed, and stimulating devotion amongst the general mass of people, specially women and the illiterates. His concept of service differed from that of Mira and Surdas and was similar to that of Kabir and Tulsidas. This is the reason that the power of unreflecting love and character of Radha are not significant in Assamese Vaishnavism.

For twelve long years (from 1483 to 1495) Sankardeva was on pilgrimage of Vaishnava cultural centres and devoted himself to cultural and intellectual pursuits. He was inspired by Bhagavatism. But Sankardeva was a family man and he neither practised *vairagya* nor encouraged it. He was a religious

mystic and laid foundation of mysticism in Assamese literature. His Vaishnavism was marked with a happy blend of catholicism and broad humanity. As already stated, his *bhakti* was liberal. It ignored caste rules, anybody who worshipped God belonged to God. His disciples came from different social status and creed and included Brahmins, Muslims, untouchables, Bhutanese etc.

Sankardeva made a tremendous impact on the literature, art and culture of Assam. A historian of Assamese literature (Hem Barua) considers Sankardeva as "the first great poet in order of time of the Assamese people and in order of merit, he is amongst the first of all Assamese poets."

For propagating his religious tenets and doctrines, Sankardeva wrote poetry, drama, songs. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and took themes from Sastras for his works. His *Bhakta Ratnakar* is a remarkable treatise on Vaishnavism. His translation of Bhagavatam inspired people. But what brought him recognition was the *Kirtana*—a long work of 26 poems of 2261 couplets. It is a rich store house of spiritual ideas and thoughts based on religious literature of ancient India. His style and language are remarkable and what adds to it is his chiselled phrasing.

He composed several other works. At the behest of Narnayan, king of Cooch Behar, he composed *Gurumala*, a book of hymns in praise of Vishnu and Krishna. The finishing rhymes and onomatopoeic words are of absorbing interest; each stanza is like an algebraic formula. His poetic excellence is also observed in his *Bargitas* and *Ankargitas*. These songs may be compared with the songs of Vidyapati and the rhyme of Jayadeva. They express the ecstatic love of the Vaishnavas—intense feeling for and expression of the infinite. The themes mostly pertain to the transitoriness of the world and uncertainty of life. He possessed creative imagination, craftsmanship and technique, excellent expression and a deep spiritual understanding. His *Bhakti Pradip* contains the quintessence of his philosophy.

Devote thyself to me  
With one undivided mind  
And keep away other gods  
At a distance

Besides being a great saint-poet, he also conducted great social work. The Vaishnava monastery system that holds a key position in Assam's social life even today is pre-eminently his creation. He is more a religious reformer than a literary artist, he is better known for his changing the tide of Assamese spiritualism than for his poetry. Here is a poetic example

The world is a dense forest .  
Spread with the fetters of illusion  
And like a deer I ramble in it  
The snares and attachments have caught me  
While like a hunter destiny pursues me

Reading

B K Barua *Saṅkaradeva Vaishnava Saint of Assam*



# Mira Bai

(1498-1547)

Mira, a saint poetess of the sixteenth century, once sought an interview with another saint named Jiva Goswami. The latter refused, saying that he did not meet women. Thereupon she sent a message enquiring of him whether besides Krishna he knew of any other male in Brindaban. Since the Krishna cult to which Goswami belonged recognised Krishna as the only male, he realised his mistake and saw Mira Bai.

Mira is one of the greatest woman saints that ever lived anywhere in the wide world. In India she was the only woman, besides Andal, who succeeded in sublimating her latent energies into mysticism. She forsook her life of luxury, dedicated herself to her beloved 'Giridhar Gopal' and expressed her feelings in exquisite songs.

Mira was born to Rao Ratan Singh of Koorki village in Nagaur district of Rajasthan in 1498. Even as a child she revealed devotional leanings. At the age of 18 she was married to Bhoja, the heir apparent of Rana of Chittorgarh. But unfortunately within a few years of their conjugal life he passed away. Miseries added to her lot when soon thereafter her father too died in a battle. A little later her father in law was put to death by a scheming prince. All these events made her life bitter and dejected and she now devoted all her time to the *bhakti* of Giridhar Gopal. She mixed freely with the *sadhus* and gave them alms, which was not to the liking of her relations. They subjected her to ceaseless persecution. It is said that once her brother in law, the Rana sent her a cup of poison, saying it was holy water. Mira drank it but nothing happened to her. On another occasion, the Rana sent to her a snake in a basket saying that it contained flowers for the God. This time too she survived. Finally, Mira fled from Chittor, became a disciple of Raidas and moved to

Brindaban and thence to Dwarka

Mira was deeply influenced by the *Bhagavat* and *Gita Govinda* and by the life of Narsimha Mehta. She perhaps met the followers of Vallabha and Chaitanya also

In respect of faith Mira was nearer to Ramananda than to the Vaishnavism of Vallabha. She was influenced by the teachings of Raidas, one of the spiritual successors of Ramananda

Mira passed away at Dwarka in 1547

Mira Bai's real eminence lay in her *bhakti*, poetry came next. Her lyrics, graceful and melodious, are full of intense devotion to Krishna. Here is one of her verses

God (Krishna) hath entwined my soul, O Mother !  
 With his attributes and I have sung of them  
 The sharp arrow of his love hath pierced my body through  
 and through, O Mother !  
 When it struck me I knew it not , now it cannot be endured  
 O Mother !  
 Though I use charms, incantations and drugs , the pain will  
 not depart  
 Is there anyone who will treat me ? Intense is the agony  
 O Mother !  
 Thou, O God art near , Thou art not distant ,  
 Come quickly to meet me  
 Saith Mira, the Lord, the mountain welder, who is com-  
 passionate, hath quenched the fire of my body, O Mother !  
 The lotus-eyed hath entwined my soul with the twine of his  
 attributes

# Surdas

## (1483-1563)

No poet has described as minutely, vividly and in depth a child's actions and emotions as the 16th century Hindi poet Surdas did. Surdas, as its literal meaning 'the blind-devotee' shows, is said to have been blind but considering the descriptions of minutest expressions of Krishna in his songs, it has been questioned whether a blind man could have described so competently. Legends have, therefore, cropped up to explain the blindness of Surdas. Some think he was born blind and as God's gift could visualise what others could not. According to others he was born with sight but at a later date lost it and that is how he could describe facial expressions, colours etc which one born blind can not do.

Like Surdas's blindness, nothing definite is known about his parents or about the date and place of his birth. According to some he was the son of Baba Ramdas, a musician in Akbar's court. When he was 8, he accompanied his parents to Mathura and Gaughat where he met Vallabhacharya, the famous *Suddhadaita margi* and *Pushti* philosopher. He settled down at Gaughat and at the Acharya's suggestion started composing songs about child Krishna. The Acharya had Surdas assigned to conduct Kirtana in the Shrinath Temple at Govardhana near Mathura where he sang in praise of Krishna and composed a lakh and twenty-five thousand songs about various facets and phases of child Krishna's life. These appear in a collection titled *Sursagar* which has now only about 5000 songs, the rest are said to have been lost.

The other legend is that Surdas was son of Harishchandra, a descendent of Chand Berdai, the famous court-poet of Prithviraj Chauhan. He had six brothers who went to fight Muslim invaders. Surdas, who being blind was left behind, now left in search of them but on the way fell in a well where

he remained for six days. On the seventh day by a miracle he was taken out. Recounting his escape to Krishna, he started composing songs in praise of his saviour, Krishna, of course on the advice of Vallabhacharya.

In tune with the above is another story about Surdas which makes him fall over himself in love with a beautiful prostitute. Not taking undue advantage of his infatuation, she diverted and directed his devotion to God. Overcome, Surdas did not want to see with his eyes another human being and got himself blinded.

Different dates have been assigned to his birth. These are as varying as 1483, 1493 and 1535. Opinions also differ about his birth place, it may be Runukta between Agra and Mathura or Sihi near Delhi.

Surdas had for his inspiration the tenth part of *Bhagavat Purana*. But *Sursagar* is neither translation nor lifting up of the ideas, Sur has his own originality. He takes an episode or passage from the *Purana* and reproduces it in poetry. He excelled in the use of images and similes. His songs became popular and his name was counted among the eight most prominent poets devoted to Krishna's praise, known as *Ashtachhapa*. He was also a great musician and it is said Akbar came to meet him and hear him sing. His *shringar* and *vaisalya* descriptions are extraordinary. Surdas made no distinction between the God and the Guru.

#### A specimen of his poetry

Without Gopal these bowers become like enemies  
In those days these creepers seemed very cool  
Now they have become fiery flowers  
In vain Jamuna flows and the birds twitter  
In vain the lotuses bloom and the black bees hum  
Surdas says Looking for the Lord  
My eyes have become red like the ghungehi seed

*Suddhadvaita* Surdas was a disciple of Vallabhacharya whose interpretation of Vedānta is known as *Suddhadvaita*, i.e., pure non-dualism. It can be summarised thus. The world is real and in essence one with Brahman. The *jna*, *kala* and *prakriti* (or *maya*) are the beings of Brahman, and although they are eternal, they have no separate existence.

God possesses qualities of existence (*sattva*), consciousness (*chit*) and bliss (*ananda*) and He is, therefore, known as *Sachchidananda*. But he has no physical form nor are his qualities ordinary. It is only to please his devotees that he appears in different forms e.g., Yajnarupa or Brahman. As Yajnarupa he is propitiated by action, as Brahman he can be approached through *jnana* (knowledge). God personified as Krishna is endorsed with *jnana* (knowledge) and Karma (action) and should be worshipped in accordance with the principles of *Gita* and *Bhagavat Purana*.

Whereas God is possessed of the qualities of *sac-chit-ananda*, in human and animal souls the quality of *ananda* is suppressed. Yet soul (*jna*) is a manifestation and part of Brahman and like wise it is real and eternal. When it attains salvation (*mukti*) it recovers the suppressed quality and becomes one with God. There is no difference between the God and the *jna* which is atomic in size and is both doer and enjoyer. The inanimate world too is filled with Brahman, is pure *sattva* (existence), and in it bliss and consciousness are obscured.

Brahman is both creator and destroyer, it is both material and efficient cause of the world. World is His manifestation and is, therefore, His effect. Creation and destruction are His manifestation or non manifestation. The world is as eternal and real as Brahman, it is not illusory nor different from Brahman, it is Brahman. Brahman manifests Himself as individual souls and as the inanimate world without undergoing any change in His essential nature.

The *jna* cannot attain salvation except through the grace of God, *bhakti* is the best course for this, *jnana* too is helpful. True faith in God absolves the *jna* of all sins. However, self mortification is bad because it is meaningless to destroy body which is the temple of God. The highest goal for the *jna* is not *mukti* (salvation) but it is qualified love and eternal service of Krishna and participation in his sports in celestial Brindavan. *Bhakti* is the best form of His worship.

## Akbar

(1542-1605)

Greatness in his manner, Kingship in his lineage as if  
Solomon would have put the ring in his finger

Thus described Jahangir the 'dignified mien and distinguished deportment' of his father Akbar, known as Akbar the Great. The Great Moghul—simple, moderate and reserved in habits—possessed a sweet disposition. He was witty and observed both mental and physical austerity. His motto was 'Sleep and food are the means of renewal of strength in seeking to do the will of God. A miserable man from folly regards them as an end.' Unlike the autocratic potentates of the times, he made himself accessible to the common people and heard personally their grievances. For these qualities of his Akbar was popular with all classes of people.

Akbar was born at Thatta (in Sindh) in 1542 while his father Humayun, the Moghul king, was a fugitive from India. His childhood passed in adversity, part of it with his uncles who were inimical to his father, and his education suffered. But with Humayun's return and capture of power in India things brightened for a while.

Akbar succeeded his father on the throne in 1556, but he had to remain under the regency of Bairam Khan for four years and under the harem's influence for another two years. In 1562 Akbar assumed direct charge of his territories. He followed for some time a policy of conquest for the expansion of his empire. However, he soon realised the value of Rajput alliance in building up an empire in India for his dynasty and married Jodha Bai, daughter of Raja Biharimal of Amer in 1562 and took Mansingh in his service. Thus Akbar mitigated the foreign character of his rule and laid the foundation of a lasting alliance with the Rajputs who constituted the most powerful organisation in North India.

To win over the Hindus, Akbar also abolished, ignoring the huge loss to the treasury, the pilgrim tax and the poll tax. These and several others of Akbar's measures assuaged Hindu feelings; for the first time under the Muslim rule they felt no more as mere tax payers. They began to look upon the Moghul king as a source of opportunities for advancement and distinction, rather than hatred and revenge. Akbar's measures also broke Hindu unity, the rulers of Marwar, Bikaner and Bundi hastened to the Moghul court, isolating the Rana of Mewar. Todarmal, Birbal and other highly placed Hindus under Akbar's rule converted a foreign government in one generation into a national state.

By his policies of conquest and diplomacy, at the age of 35 Akbar was master of an empire which extended from the borders of Central Asia to Assam in the east and Vindhya mountains in the south. Mewar was the only state that did not accept Akbar's authority.

Akbar's liberal religious policy too proved very helpful to him. He built a House of Worship in which intimate discussions on religious subjects were held. He honoured many saints and attempted to establish Din Ilahi which was a departure from the rigid Islamic tradition. The empire became cosmopolitan and in fact Jesuit fathers, Parsi priests, Jain sadhus and Hindu sanyasins were received with equal favour, to the disgust of orthodox Muslims.

Akbar passed on to his son a settled empire, a people attached to the dynasty by loyalty, a treasury full and an enemy which had not met with defeat. Akbar left to his successors three essential lines of policy: the maintenance of the national state, the conciliation of the Hindus and the unification of India. Although Akbar did not have the benefit of a formal education, by constant intercourse with the learned and the wise, he was well acquainted with the niceties of verse and prose composition. He could expound difficult matters clearly and lucidly. He was well informed, learned and fond of learned men's company.

Akbar was a patron of arts and letters and encouraged poets, scholars and thinkers. His generosity to scholars and his deep interest in religious and philosophical matters brought to his court scholars from all parts of Asia. Akbar's court

## Birbal

(1528-1583)

Birbal was brimful with wit and humour in the staid and serious contemporary society of the Moghul era. The business like grimness was partly relieved by poets and musicians but in Akbar's time mainly by a minister, named Birbal, with whom are associated innumerable anecdotes. He would create a situation outwardly innocuous and without going deep into it people would laugh and even mock at the courtier. While Socrates had used the method of inquiry to expose others' conceit and hollowness, Birbal let others question him to realise for themselves their own errors of judgement. The men who thus looked small in their own eyes included the big and the small—even Birbal's patron, emperor Akbar was not spared. The confrontation, however, never resulted in unpleasantness. A ripple of laughter ran into everything and the matter ended then and there only to be narrated later on like a fable.

Raja Birbal was 'one of the nine jewels' of the royal court of Akbar. By a combination of self-effort and luck he rose from an ordinary calling to be a minister of the Great Moghul and even wielded a great influence on him. He was born in 1528 at Kalpi in U P. His family name was Maheshdas, a Brahmbhatt by caste and as such a versifier. He started with the Raja of Bhatta and latter moved to the court of Raja of Amber who sent him to the court of Akbar. Though he was not a man of high educational attainments, Birbal possessed natural gifts and in the royal court he excelled all courtiers, Hindus and Muslims, in wit, humour, the art of conversation, story telling, and repartee and rapidly rose in royal confidence and favour. Many stories, anecdotes and witty sayings attributed to Birbal have come down to posterity and are cherished. These never cross the limit to the obscene, indecent or vulgar.



Jesters to royal personages have been many but none known so much as Birbal

Impressed by Birbal's intelligence, Akbar conferred on him the title of Kavirai, i.e. poet laureate. He also favoured him with riches. He gave him in jagir Nagarkot in the Kangra district and later Kalinjar in Uttar Pradesh. In 1583 Birbal was placed in charge of administration of justice and received and scrutinised petitions before these could reach the emperor for justice. Besides, he was also in charge of purchases and sale of some commodities. He was a diplomat and was employed on various missions to the court of the Hindu rajas. However, his main function was to give Akbar company, and that is the source of his renown.

Birbal was the only notable Hindu member of Akbar's *Din-e-Ilahi*. He influenced Akbar in showing reverence to the sun as also his life and thought in favour of Hinduism. Akbar did him a rare favour in visiting his new palace in 1583 and a year later saved Birbal's life from a ferocious elephant.

Birbal had risen from ordinary surroundings and helped supplicants, particularly poets with generous gifts. His pen-name was 'Brahmadas' and in this pseudonym he wrote many *kavittas* and *dohas*.

But being a poet was not enough in those days. One had to be good at the battle field also. Birbal had no military exploit to his credit, and this was a subject of comment outside the court. In order to silence these babblers, Birbal persuaded the emperor to nominate him to command an army against the revolting Yusafzais in the north west. But when he proceeded in 1586 with Abul Fateh to Attock there were dissensions in the army. On the night of 16 February 1586 the tribesmen attacked the Moghul army. In the encounter Birbal was killed.

Akbar was much grieved at the death of his friend and refused to take food for two days. He censured Hakim Abul Fateh and Zari Khan for their betrayal of Birbal. He took Birbal's son Lala in the imperial service and made him a *mansabdar*. The emperor lamented that Birbal's body could not be recovered for cremation according to Hindu rites. Birbal's death left a void in Akbar's life.

Birbal believed in making others happy with his wit and humour, which differed from fun of the *Vidushaks* portrayed

in Sanskrit dramas. An anecdote about hen-pecked husbands associated with Birbal's name would bear narration here.

Akbar once asked Birbal whether women are very overpowering and husbands play like toys in their hands. Birbal's reply was in the affirmative but Akbar differed from him. Finally to prove the point one way or the other, the gentry was invited to the august presence. The audience was told that those amongst them not afraid of their wives should fall to the left and the rest would go to the right side. To every body's surprise every one went to the left, excepting one lean and thin person who stood alone to the right. Akbar was nevertheless happy that at least there was one brave man. Asked by Birbal how the man had kept aloof, the man replied that when he was coming to the court, his wife had asked him to keep off the crowd and that was how he had gone to the right.

# Tansen

## (1531-1589)

A singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years — *Fazl*

The above remark about Tansen holds good even today, during the intervening period too none of his calibre and stature has appeared in the field of music in India. Tansen was particularly skilled in Dhrupad and Deepak styles of music which he developed to perfection. He introduced minor changes in some of the ragas and invented twelve new ragas. He showed Hindustani music a new path and symbolised the best in that music. Sangit Sar and Raga Mala are two of his compositions.

Tansen was also a good poet and composed numerous verses in praise of Hindu gods and goddesses, Muslim saints, and his patrons, Raja Ram Chandra and Akbar.

In spite of his fame, not much is known about Tansen's original name and early life. He was born in a Brahmin family at Behat, a village near Gwalior, in 1531-32 and had his early training in music at the Gwalior school of music which was founded by Raja Mansingh Tomar. The school had continued to function even after its founder's death. Later, it is believed, Tansen learnt under the guidance of the saint musician, Haridas of Brindaban.

Tansen took service under Raja Ramchandra Baghel of Bhatta (Rewa). The ruler was a great patron of art and literature and bestowed on Tansen his favours, honours and wealth. The talents further endeared the musician to the Raja and the latter bestowed on him the title of Tansen. Tansen's fame reached the Moghul court and in 1562 Akbar invited him. The emperor sent a mission which could not be ignored. The Raja relieved the musician with heavy heart, the musician too was reluctant to leave. Tansen finally left Bhatta to reach

Agra at the end of 1562 For 27 years Tansen adorned, with other 35 musicians, the court of Akbar He enjoyed the honour of being the master musician of the empire and one of the 'nine jewels' of Akbar's court Because of his great name, he came to be called as 'Miya' which is perhaps equivalent to 'Sir' Tansen had been converted to Islam

Miya Tansen died on 26 April 1589 at Lahore Akbar was deeply touched at his friend's passing away and observed that 'in Tansen's death melody had been annihilated' He was given a state burial and on the emperor's orders prominent musicians formed a procession and accompanied the dead body to the grave-yard In the procession they sang as if they were going in a marriage party Later Tansen's body was taken to Gwalior and was laid by the side of the mausoleum of the Muslim saint, Shaikh Mohammed Gaus The small but dignified grave is a place of pilgrimage for musicians from all over India Legend has it that an Imli tree near the grave gives forth leaves which do immense good to a man's voice and throat

Tansen is called 'Sangita Samrat', the emperor of music

# Maharana Pratap

(1540-1597)

**M**aharana Pratap succeeded "to the titles and renown of an illustrious house but without a capital, without resources, his kindred and clans dispirited by reverses, yet possessed of the noble spirit of his race, he meditated the recovery of Chittor, the vindication of the honour of his house and the restoration of its power" (Todd) That was in 1572 when his father Maharana Uday Singh died

It was the desire of Akbar to conquer Mewar which brought him in interminable conflict with Pratap. The two were unequal in material resources and man power, yet Pratap matched well Akbar in the quality of leadership and in will power. Pratap was determined to return at whatever cost the liberty of his state and to preserve the sovereign status against the encroachment of the most powerful and wealthy monarch of his age. For Pratap it was also a matter of honour and dignity of the entire Rajput race. Akbar blockaded Rana's dominion and exerted maximum military and political pressure on Pratap to accept his suzerainty but the latter frustrated all such designs. Pratap preferred the life of privation and struggle to a life of ease and comfort.

Akbar in fact started with diplomacy. Between 1571 and 1572 he sent successively four missions to persuade the Maharana to fall in line with other prominent Rajput rulers. Each of the four i.e., Jalal Khan Qorchi, Mansingh, Bhagwan Dass and Raja Todarmal was accorded friendly reception but Pratap declined to attend the court at Agra and the missions failed. Diplomacy having failed, Akbar decided to take to military measures. From the continuous military pressure and pincer tactics exerted by the Moghuls, Pratap realised that a life and death war with the Moghuls was inevitable. He ordered the plains of his country to be ravaged, so that the invader might

not get even food, fodder and shelter. He also fortified strategic places in the hills and valleys of Girwa, stationed valiant soldiers to defend the Haldighat (a strategic pass) and cultivated friendly relations with the Bhils. He perfected the guerilla technique of warfare, kept his troops perpetually on the alert and inspired his people with the ideals of patriotism and self reliance.

Akbar commissioned Mansingh, one of his ablest generals, to proceed to Mewar on April 1, 1576 at the head of some crack troops and capable officers. The memorable battle of Haldighat, called by Todd as Thermopylae of Mewar, was fought on 18 June 1576. Pratap took up the offensive and his vanguard made such a fierce and successful charge that the Moghuls of the front-line were defeated and driven back. Many from the Moghul army ran away. A mulla Ghazi Khan fled crying out "flight from overwhelming odds is one of the traditions". After this initial set back the Moghul army recovered and Mansingh fought so bravely that Budayun, who had always looked upon Rajput alliance with scepticism, said that he was convinced of Mulla Sheri's remarks that "the Hindu wields the sword of Islam". The Rajputs fought with great valour. In the hand to hand fight many of Pratap's allies e.g. Ram Shah of Gwalior and his three sons, and Ramdas son of illustrious Jaimal showed prodigious valour and fell fighting to their last. The Maharana on his horse Chetak and Mansingh on his elephant fought fiercely. The arrival of fresh Moghul troops, however, changed the tide of the war. The Maharana was wounded and surrounded by enemies. Seeing Pratap's precarious position, his friends seized the bridle of Chetak and turned him back towards the entrance of Haldighat. Jhala Bida of Badi Sadri took on himself the Royal umbrella to put off the enemies. The Maharana escaped and Bida met the hero's death. Mansingh finally came out victorious. He, however, failed in his mission of capturing Pratap alive or dead. It was just a barren victory.

The battle of Haldighat failed in breaking Maharana's power, it only caused a temporary set back. It stiffened his attitude and gave him fresh confidence and moral strength. He realised his mistake in having made a frontal attack and decided upon guerilla warfare for future. The battle changed the

character of warfare between Pratap and Akbar

Akbar was bitter and on the pretext of going on a hunting expedition left on 12 October 1576 for Gogunda. But the Maharana retreated and took shelter in the hills and followed a scorched earth policy and thus made the occupation of Mewar unprofitable for the enemy. Pratap would get information about the movement of the Moghul army and would slip from his pursuers. Once when Kumbhalgarh was besieged, he escaped in the guise of a Sanyasi. Shahbaz Khan made repeated efforts but failed in laying his hands on Pratap. But Pratap plundered and devastated part of Mewar under the Moghuls.

When the Moghuls were busy in the east and the north west, Pratap took full advantage of his adversary's involvement and captured part of his territory. During the last twelve years of his life he recovered many of the lost territories, reorganised the administration, strengthened his army and built a new capital at Chavand where on 19 June 1597 he breathed his last. In the long and bitter contest Akbar failed and Pratap won for the latter refused to be enslaved.

✓ Maharana Pratap had rare qualities. He had deep regard for women. When some women of Abdur Rahim Khan Khana fell in the hands of his son Amar Singh, Pratap asked him to send the women honourably back. They were safely escorted to Khan Khana.

The Maharana has been called the 'embodiment of the elemental spirit of India'. For the posterity Rana is not only a great hero but also a successful upholder of Hindu prestige and honour. Even now Pratap is a beacon light and Haldighat a place of pilgrimage for millions. It must, however, be remembered that Pratap was not a communal bigot as is sometimes made out, Afghans fought against the Moghuls on his side.

Reading

— Todd *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*

# Tulsidas

(1523-1624)

The *Ramcharitmanas* is interwoven into the life, character and speech of the Hindu population for more than three hundred years and is not only loved and admired by them for its poetic beauty but it is revered by them as their scripture. It is the Bible of a hundred million people to the vast majority of the people of Hindustan, learned and unlearned alike their sole form of conduct is the so called *Tulsi Krit Ramayana*.

Tulsidas, the author of the *Ramcharitmanas* and several other works, has influenced the course of life of the common man and continues doing so. For more than 300 million of the people of India as also for most Indians settled abroad—for people of various walks of life—it is a sacred text. It stands supreme both as a literary creation and as an expression of religion and Tulsidas is one of the greatest poets of all time.

The subject matter of the *Ramcharitmanas*, popularly called the Ramayana, is the story of Rama which centuries ago was treated by Valmiki in Sanskrit. Tulsidas gave the story a popular appeal and made it a vehicle for preaching the supreme value of worship of Rama. While the general outline of the two works is the same yet there is no doubt that Tulsidas changed many episodes and added some of his own. Besides, there is a vast difference in their treatment, the main difference being in their theological outlook. Valmiki's Rama was just a man, Tulsidas's Rama figures throughout as an incarnation of the supreme God. Tulsidas's work is superior in poetic merit also.

The *Ramcharitmanas* is divided into seven *kands*, namely: Bal, Ayodhya, Aranya, Kishkindha, Sunder, Lanka and Uttar. Tulsidas's characters are consistently drawn and many scenes are full of pathos. The grief of Dasarath, the filial piety, obedience, generosity and nobility of Rama, the wisely devotion of



Sita, the courage and enthusiasm of Lakshmana and the unselfishness of Bharata described by Tulsidas cannot but 'awaken a response in the reader's heart'. While Valmiki had praised Bharata's sense of duty and Lakshmana's brotherly affection, Tulsī presented them as examples, as ideals. The fundamentals of the *Manas* stand out as the ideals of family life.

Tulsī accepted the pantheistic teachings of Vedānta. He belonged to the *Sāgama* cult of *bhakti* with two prominent features: one, he made *bhakti* a part of social structure both for individual and social salvation, and, two, he was rigid in his view about social structure and castes. In his attack on *sūdras*, Tulsī was extremely pungent and it is difficult to reason out his observation about 'drum, rustic, *sūdra*, animal and woman'. Some assert that Tulsī was more progressive than many of his contemporaries, he was more moderate than Ramanujā who limited his worship to Vishnu, Tulsī though a Vaishnavite worshipped Siva also. Tulsī popularised Vaishnavism more than anyone else. The *Manas* was the product of a period and culmination of a great religious movement.

Tulsī could have made himself as grand and obscure as any philosopher but he was too pious to lose himself in this manner. With modesty, yet boldness, he said at the very beginning 'My lot is low, my purpose high, but I am confident of one thing that the God will be gratified to hear me though fools may laugh. They have no taste for poetry nor love for Rama, nevertheless their laughter will do me good. If my homely speech and poor wit are subjects fit for their laugh, good that they laugh, but for no fault of mine. If they have no understanding of true devotion to the Lord, for them the tale will be insipid, but to the true and orthodox worshippers of Hari and Hara (Vishnu and Siva) the story of Raghubar will be sweet as honey. He wrote in the people's language and his works appealed greatly to them.

Tulsī emphasised the doctrine of *Māyā* as a divine expression and activity in all material and personal diversity. All things, specially man's offences and mistakes with their disastrous consequences are because of *Māyā*. Salvation with him is from the consequence of wrong action resulting in birth after birth and may be salvation either to the condition of cessation of personal being in Brahma or to a place forever in

personal bliss in the realm of Rama.' But all through the *Manas*, Rama is the supreme spirit incarnate that claims supreme devotion. He preached a simple and sublime religion, a perfect faith in the name of God.

Tulsidas was born in or about 1523 (1527 ?) and passed away in 1623 or 1624. His father was Atma Ram and mother Hulsī. Several places e.g. Hajipur, Rajapur claim to be his birth place. While young he was so passionately in love with his wife that one day when she went to her father's house, Tulsī hastened after her in the dark and crossed a swollen river to reach her. His wife rebuked him : "It would do you immense good if you showed as much devotion to Rama." These words acted like a call and Tulsī left home never to return. He took his abode at Kashi where in the devotion of Rama he spent the greater part of his life. He became a disciple of Naraharidas, the sixth in the preceptorial succession of Ramananda. He started writing the Ramayana at Ayodhya in 1575.

Tulsī appeared at a time when the Hindu society was falling apart. He gave it a stern morality in every sense of the word. He was a great preacher of one's duty towards one's neighbour.

#### Reading :

G.E. Grierson : *Notes on Tulsidas*

Mataprasad Gupta *Tulsidas (Hindi)*

[Tulsidas wrote a large number of works of which *Manas*, *Vinaya Patrika*, *Kav tavali* and *Dohavalī* are prominent.

# Shahjahan

(1592-1666)

‘Nothing like that (Tajmahal) was built or has ever been conceived in the whole history of Indian sculpture’ It has been called ‘a poem in stone’, and ‘the seventh wonder of the world’

Shahjahan the Moghul emperor built the Tajmahal to perpetuate the memory of his queen Mumtaj Mahal

Besides the Tajmahal, a great many other buildings were built in Shahjahan’s time. The monuments of his instiable architectural interest stand out even today at many places. The most representative and the best preserved of these are at Agra and Delhi. Their engineering skill is unsurpassed, in spite of the lapse of three centuries, they are as fresh and charming and ‘breathe sublimity, peace, elegance and grandeur’

Shahjahan had a taste for architecture dating back to the very early period of his life. While young, he got altered and renovated his residential buildings with imagination. But when he became king, he gave expression to his cherished ideas and ambitions that reflected in the buildings. He discussed every plan with experts in great detail before giving it his final approval.

Agra has the exquisite structures of Diwan e-Am, Diwan e-Khas, residences for royal ladies and Saman Burj in the Fort. The chambers, corridors and pavilions are of pure marble, and elaborately carved and exquisitely ornamented with floral designs. Moti Masjid is another instance of perfection of art combined with simplicity. Built of white marble without any pietra dura elaboration to mar the sublimity of ‘the house of God’ it took seven years to complete and cost a fortune. His eldest daughter Jahanara built Jami Masjid, a fine structure of bold design, excellent finish and magnificent proportions.

The Tajmahal is, however, the crowning beauty. Its

extreme delicacy, architectural grandeur, perfect taste, artistic bulbous domes, beautifully carved screens, and chaste in-lay work defy description. Nowhere have grandeur and simplicity been coordinated in such perfect rhythm and symmetry. 'It is a monument conceived but mastered by tenderness, to commemorate Mumtaz Mahal who unable to bear the strain of child birth died in 1631 at Burhanpur. The king was so overwhelmed that tears burst from his eyes and for two years he abstained from entertainments' Later the body was brought to Agra where it was buried on the banks of the Jamuna in a plot of land which belonged to Raja Man Singh and which Shahjahan bought from Mansingh's grandson at a nominal price. Within the next 17 years came up the tomb 'a magnificent sculpture which was to mark for all time to come the tribute of a devoted husband to a devoted wife'

The Delhi Palace is a harmonious structure Its beauty and magnificence are unique The Diwan-e-Khas, the Diwan-e-Am and Lahori Gate are richly ornamented, and the Jami Masjid built of red stone is in complete harmony with the outside walls of the Fort (Besides Agra and Delhi, Ajmer, Ambala, Bari, Faizabad, Gwalior, Kabul, Lahore and Kashmir too have beautiful monuments that were put up by Shahjahan)

Prince Khurram or Shahjahan as he was to be latter known was born on 5 January 1592 at Lahore His father was Jahangir and mother the Rajput princess Manmati or Jagat Gosain Khurram was adopted by Akbar's wife, Rajiah Begum who was childless In 1607, he received from his father a military rank and in 1160 was married to Arjmand Banu Begum, the daughter of Asaf Khan He proved himself a capable statesman and general in several campaigns In 1617 he was given the title of Shahjahan But later feeling that Jahangir being more fond of other children might bypass him for succession, he ruthlessly removed from his path his brothers, Khusrau and Shahariyar Shahjahan's coronation took place on 4 February 1628 For twenty years he ruled and made some minor annexations to the empire But more than this it is his contributions to architecture that entitle him to greatness

Shahjahan ruled from Agra till 1648 when he shifted his capital to Delhi He named it Shahjahanabad and brought to it the famous peacock throne

Shahjahan fell seriously ill in 1657. The news spread great consternation in the empire and his children decided to settle the issue of succession by sword. Finally, Aurangzeb came out victorious and he not only settled the score with his brothers but imprisoned his father and was unpardonably cruel to him. To his relief, princess Jahanara, however, served him well. Imprisonment shattered Shahjahan's health and he passed away on 22 June 1666, 'in full view of the Tajmahal'. Thus closed in tragedy his kingly career as it had earlier opened with a tragedy.

The chroniclers style Shahjahan as a zealous Muslim and defender of Islam. There is no doubt that he restored the waning fortunes of Islam in India. On the negative side, he has to his discredit the demolition of a few temples, especially the one built by Birsingh Bundela. Some call him a virtuous and affable sovereign. He adhered to the policy of political alliance with Hindus and never alienated them, some Hindus like Raja Jaswant Singh even held high offices under him. At the other extreme is the description of Shahjahan given by Europeans as a despicable despot. Manuchi wrote, "It would seem as if the only thing Shahjahan cared for was the search for women to serve his pleasure." He also writes about the intimacy of Shahjahan with the wives of two of his nobles Jafar Khan and Khalilullah Khan, which became a gossip so notorious that when the ladies went to the court, the mendicants in loud voice cried out to Jafar Khan's wife, "O Breakfast of Shahjahan, remember us". And, when the wife of Khalilullah went by, they shouted, "O Luncheon of Shahjahan, succour us".

Reading

E B Havell *Ind an Sculpture and Painting*

# Dara Shukoh

(1615—1659)

'Dara and Akbar stand unique among Muslim thinkers of India as regards their moral courage and sincerity of conviction'  
—K R Qanungo

Dara was the greatest scholar of his age. He had a mystic bent of mind and his literary and spiritual pursuits were directed at establishing harmony between the two apparently conflicting customs and creeds of India. The first serious student of comparative religion and comparative mythology in medieval India, Dara preferred moral renunciation to asceticism and turned out volumes and tracts to bring about concord between the two communities.

Contacts with saints, mostly Sufis, the great ones amongst whom were Mian Mir and Kavindracharya, awakened Dara to a spiritual life. He himself turned a Sufi, affirmed the unity of God (*tawhid*) and tried to realise the goal through knowledge and contemplation. By study and occult practices, he acquired a philosophical imagination which to a Sufi is the true wisdom and help to know himself and become a perfect man (*kamil*). Unity in plurality was the keystone of his theosophy and Dara's views rapidly veered towards Vedantism, he realised the absolute identity of the human spirit with God. In the final stage of his religion and religious life, he rejected dogmas and rituals of religion as superfluous. In his Quranic studies he rejects orthodoxy as unproductive and intellectual sterility, the externals of Islam, save Allah, Mohammed and Quran perished in Dara's mysticism. For this liberalism, Dara was accused by Muslim theologians of heresy and of being a pantheist.

Dara was the third child and the first son of Shahjahan and Mumtaz Mahal, born on 20 March 1615 at Ajmer. From his very early age, he developed scholarly pursuits and showed great interest in Persian poetry and speculative science. The

miracles of saints entertained him more than the exploits of warlike heroes

Dara's studies of religions with the object of discovering their underlying principles and harmonising these with the tenets of Islam resulted in Persian translations of the best tenets of Hindu philosophy, including *Bhagvatgita* and as many as 50 Upanishads. His *Sir ul-Asrar* (the Secret of Secrets) is one of the greatest literary achievements. Earlier he had compiled a comprehensive work on the lives and miracles of the saints of Islam. Mian Mir and Maulana Shah bore a great influence on him and after his initiation Dara designated himself as a Qadiri and Hanafi. His other works include a biography of Mian Mir, a gist of Sufistic practices and the different stages of spiritual illumination. For these and other achievements, Dara called himself Kamil, a perfect man.

Dara's constant exercise of emotion and association with Sufis and Hindu mystics made him credulous, sensitive and impractical which mainly accounted for his failure in political life. Even at the time when he laid siege of Qandhar, Dara was beguiled that the town would fall with the help of magic and miracles. He gave his confidence blindly to a few upstarts without experience of war which created a breach between him and high nobles who later harmed Dara. As a matter of fact he lacked the capacity to judge men and situations at first hand. His doing father overlooked his failures and honoured him on return from the war. Dara's career as a soldier and administrator was uneventful.

In the summer of 1657 when Shahjahan fell seriously ill he made his last will in favour of his eldest son, Dara. But the younger princes Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad conducted a pernicious propaganda against Dara. They forged an alliance and accused Dara of imprisoning the emperor and usurping supreme power. Shadulla Khan, the minister who had been inimical to Dara, and even the Rajput princes, to whom Dara had rendered great help in the past, not only deserted him but joined the opposing group. When Dara lost the battle at Dharmat, traitors threw off their masks and even friends began to waver. Dara was, however, fortunate in having a most loving wife, Nadira Begum who solidly stood by him in his distress. The battle of Shamugarth decided Dara's fate and

closed the Age of Akbar—the age of nationalism in politics and culture

After Shamugarh, Dara became a pessimist. He moved from place to place through the Punjab, Rajputana and Gujarat and finally decided to go to Persia. On the way he thought of taking shelter with Jivan Malik whose life he had saved from the wrath of the emperor. But the treacherous Malik handed him over to Aurangzeb's partisans. Dara was brought as a captive to Delhi on 23 August 1659.

Exposed to the full blaze of an August sun, Dara and his younger son were taken indecorously through the scenes of his former glory and splendour. In the bitterness of his disgrace he neither raised his head nor cast his glance to any side. Only once did he look up when a poor beggar from the road side cried out, "Oh Dara ! When you were master, you always gave me alms, today I know you have nothing to give". Poor Dara had nothing to give except a drop of tear and a look of sympathy. Nevertheless, he raised his hand and threw his headgear to the beggar. The onlookers sighed.

After this Aurangzeb felt more embittered and referred the case against Dara to the Ulemas who accused Dara of heresy and issued the fatwa of death sentence. Thus Aurangzeb out of necessity—to protect the faith and the state—stage-managed a ghastly death to his elder brother. The charges of heresy such as wearing a ring with the word 'Prabhu' inscribed in Devanagari, association with Hindu ascetics and gift of a stone railing to the Keshav Rai temple were certainly not serious enough to justify capital punishment, it was a case of political murder.

While the subsequent success of Aurangzeb adversely affected the country's political destiny, Dara's failure was that he gave importance to concord between Hindus and Muslims rather than to war and statecraft. A historian says 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that anyone who intends to take up the solution of the problem of religious peace in India must begin the work where Dara left it and proceed to the path chalked out by that prince. The world has not become richer anyway by the long reign of Aurangzeb, but it would have been certainly poorer without Dara Shukoh. Dara signifies a force of progress and Aurangzeb of reaction.'



## Shivaji

(1627-1680)

If a person ever attained real greatness through his mother's teachings and influence over character, then it can without fear of contradiction be said that Indian history provides no better example than Shivaji's. Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha confederacy that shook the very foundations of the mighty Moghul empire of Aurangzeb, was born at Shivaneri, in Maharashtra, in 1627, the son of Shahaji and Jijabai. From his mother he imbibed a religious bent of mind and strong faith in his life's mission to which he accorded priority over personal advancement. Throughout Shivaji's life, Jijabai was the guiding genius and her approbation filled him with undaunted courage. As for his father, the two never lived together, Shahaji having gone to live in the south to look after his estate.

On the other hand it was Shahaji's manager of the Poona estates, Dadaji Kondadev who proved an excellent guardian to Shivaji. He taught Shivaji the skills of peace and war as also the way to organise and control undisciplined forces. Jijabai had earlier shifted with her son to Poona with her husband's permission. The surrounding hill forts were associated in Shivaji's memory as his only safe home and he developed character, hardihood and enterprise from his earliest days.

Shivaji's future career started with the occupation of Torana in 1646 when he was only 19. Raigarh was next fortified. Conquests of forts of Supa, Chakan, Simhagarh and Purandar followed one after other. The Mavales were brought under control and were enrolled in the army. In the first six years he busied himself with unruly neighbours in the command of the hill forts and Mavales about Poona. He had no thought of defying the distant authority of the Moghul commanders at Aurangabad or of the kings of Bijapur. He had his own jagir

to protect, which he did by repairing the neglected hill-forts commanding on all sides. He also had a dominant idea of uniting together the scattered forces of the Maratha chiefs in his neighbourhood.

Shivaji succeeded in this preliminary task without bloodshed and with the consent of the parties. He, however, found himself in conflict with the Bijapur kings who first treacherously imprisoned his father and sent emissaries to surprise and capture him, and afterwards tried to crush him by a series of invasions. In this weird war of surprise and treachery, Shivaji himself killed Afzal Khan (of the Bijapur army). The conflict, however, extended over ten years at the end of which Shivaji succeeded in dictating his own terms and in establishing his power over a large territory.

In the political situation then prevalent in the country, the advance of the Moghul arms in the South was a predominant factor which Shivaji had to reckon with. Shivaji succeeded in checking the tide which infuriated the Moghuls and their chroniclers so much so that they used derisive language for him, calling him 'mountain rat', 'free booter', etc. But Shivaji was none of these. In fact he was a great strategist and his guerilla tactics made the stay of the Moghul commanders miserable. Shivaji's strength lay in his recognising the aspirations of his age and of the race to which he belonged, as a leader he gave concrete shape to these. Efforts were later made to associate Shivaji's descent with the royal house of Udaipur but it would be wrong to assume that he derived strength from the Rajput ancestry or that he was an incarnation of Siva as is claimed by his followers.

Shivaji had the feeling that the tide of Muslim invasions could be checked by a united opposition and in this he gave no thought to religion or race or caste or colour. He tried to interlace men's interests and ambitions in a way that they took pride in common success and felt ashamed in common defeat. Possessed of a magnetic personality, Shivaji attracted towards himself all that was helpful and aspiring in the land, without any distinction whatsoever. His self-discipline was as great as his power of control and military daring. His considerations for the cultivators as also for women won him even his enemy's applause. Even in the worst circumstances his

armies 'never molested cows, women and cultivators.'

Shivaji had made offers of submission to Shahajahan so as to bring pressure on the Bijapur king to release his father and also to secure recognition for certain claims of his own. Shahajahan had promised to consider these as and when Shivaji pressed them in person in his court. When Aurangzeb was leaving for the North to press his own claim to the throne against his brothers, he left behind instructions which recognized Shivaji's claims to the Konkan and suggested that he should serve the emperor with a picked number of horses. But on ascending the throne, Aurangzeb broke this understanding and in 1661, the Moghul army seized Kalyan. The next year the Marathas led an expedition to Aurangabad and seized forts north of Junnar. Shaistakhan, the Moghul general, thereupon seized Poona and Chakan and made Poona his headquarters. But Shivaji was a strategist. The Marathas made a surprise attack on Shaistakhan in his own palace in the night and defeated the pursuing Moghul army. In 1664 Shivaji attacked Surat and the Maratha navy captured ships bound for Mecca. In 1665, they plundered a rich port to the south of Goa and thus Shivaji established his authority in North Kanara. Shaistakhan never rallied and was recalled. A second army under Raja Jai Singh and Dilerkhan was sent to reduce Shivaji's power, the Moghul army entered the Maratha country unaffected. For reasons not sufficiently explained, Shivaji made submission to the Raja and made over most of his forts and territories. A truce was arranged.

Then a council of regency was formed of his three most trusted advisers with Jijabai at its head, and Shivaji entered Moghul service. He marched with Jai Singh against Bijapur. With assurances of personal safety, he went with his son and a force of Mavales to Delhi. But Aurangzeb received him rather coolly and finding that he had made a great mistake, with strategem Shivaji escaped and after ten months returned to his homeland.

Aurangzeb sent a third army under his son with Raja Jaswant Singh. The prince concluded, with his father's consent, an arrangement which granted Shivaji the title of Raja, gave his son a mansab of 5000 horses, a jagir to Shivaji in Berar in lieu of his claims to Junnar and Ahmednagar, and

restored most of the earlier jagir. The arrangement lasted two years till the Moghuls concluded their war with Bijapur in 1669, when Aurangzeb ordered his son to apprehend Shivaji by force or strategy. On getting the news, the Marathas attacked and took Simhgarh and other forts by storm. They also entered Berar, took Chauth (one fourth of revenue as tax) and plundered many other towns. Thus, within a few years Shivaji succeeded in regaining all his old possessions and in greatly extending his conquest both by land and sea. Earlier Shivaji's claims to Chauth and Sardeshmukhi were recognised by the kings of Bijapur and Golkunda and they had agreed to pay to Shivaji three lakh and five lakh rupees, respectively.

Shivaji thus vindicated his claims to the Padshahi of Hindus and a formal coronation took place in 1674. During the remaining period of his life Shivaji was left to himself by the Moghuls.

Shivaji also made a mark as a civil ruler. He paid his army salary either in cash or in kind but he did not assign them jagirs. He united his people for self-defence but had no ambition to conquer the whole of the country.

'Religious fervour, a daring and adventurous spirit born of confidence, the magnetism of superior genius, a rare insight into the needs of the times, a steadfastness of purpose, a readiness and resourcefulness, true patriotism—these were the sources of Shivaji's strength and his movement. A nationalist, he drew young men from all classes—Hindus, Musalmans, Jews, Christians and others who reposed confidence in him. They enjoyed their freedom of worship and for his religious tolerance served him with devotion. It is not known to many that it was one Madari Mehtar, a Muslim bodyguard of his, who gave his life to help Shivaji escape from Agra. Equally significant is the fact that his naval commander was a Musalman.'

# Guru Gobind Singh

(1666-1708)

**G**uru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, who was harassed and tortured by the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb's men, wrote in a desperate moment to his son Gobind Rai, who later became famous as Gobind Singh

My strength is exhausted  
I am in chains and have no rescue  
Saith Nanak God is now my refuge ,  
*He will succour me as He did the elephant*

The reply of the son, a mere boy of 9, was

Strength is thine, the fetters are loosened ,  
Thou hast every rescue ,  
Nanak, everything is in thy power  
It is only thou who canst assist thyself

This shows the inside steel frame of Gobind Singh as also his readiness to make any sacrifice for the ideals. In 1675 Guru Tegh Bahadur fell a martyr which left a strong impression on the young mind. The sacrifices and the memories of the cruelties meted out to the Sikhs hardened Gobind Rai, who succeeded to the pontificate as Guru Gobind Singh.

Gobind Singh was born at Patna in 1666. But when he was young, his father Guru Teg Bahadur for reasons of safety shifted to Anandpur. After Teg Bahadur's martyrdom, Gobind Singh found the conditions not very congenial and, therefore, moved out temporarily to live at Paonta on the banks of Jamuna which being in the interior was safer. Between 1680—1696 he consolidated his power and fought successfully many battles at Bhangani, Nandaun etc with the hill Rajas and Moghul army each of which proved Gobind Singh's military genius.

Gobind Singh realised that if the challenge of the mightier forces of the Moghuls was to be successfully met, the Sikhs must rely on their own resources. Looking inward, he concluded that Nanak's message of purity, modesty and God-realisation which had fallen into disuse would have to be rekindled, and that whatever stood in the way would have to be removed. He destroyed the system of Masands, attacked the caste system and decided to give the Sikhs such shape and form that none of them would be able to conceal himself and yet call himself a Sikh only when the circumstances were favourable. This resolve gave birth to the militant Khalsa which fought many battles with the tyrants. As a matter of fact, the Sikhs gave the young Guru the ideal, the Jat the material, and from the combination of the two, he forged a dynamic force.

In April 1699 (on Baisakhi day) Gobind Singh convened a large gathering at Keshgarh, near Anandpur and told the audience: 'Men quarrel over diet, dress, ritual, caste and creed and these have torn man from man. My mission is to restore mankind to a single brotherhood.' Talking of the tyrants, he said: 'I will call myself Gobind Singh only if I can make the meek sparrows pounce upon the hawks and tear them, only if one combatant of my force equals a lakh and a quarter of the enemy. In a dramatic way he asked the gathering to come forward to sacrifice themselves and in response from the audience came forward five persons, to be known as Panj Piyaare (the beloved five) who were initiated with khande da pahal. The underlying object of this was to give the Sikhs courage, fortitude and will to face the trials of an honourable life. The Sikhs were asked to bear five distinguishing symbols, i.e., Kesh, Kara, Kripan, Kachehha and Kanga (five K's) and to chant aloud Wahe Guruj Ka Khalsa, Shri Wahe Guruj Ki Fateh (God's is the Khalsa and God's is the victory). They were given the appellation of Singh (lion) and became Khalsa (pure). This knit the Sikhs together in brotherly love, created amongst them a sense of nationalism and transformed the community into a military organisation in which every member undertook, when necessary, to suffer the loss of life, family, and even honour in the service of the Panth.

Gobind Singh won many battles against the Hill Chiefs

and the Moghul Sardars of Sirhind and Lahore, infuriated at which Aurangzeb ordered stern measures against the Sikh Guru. There ensued a battle at Chamkaur in which Gobind Singh lost two of his sons and the other two were captured. When the young lads were asked either to be converted to Islam or be ready to die, they bravely opted for the latter. Without a sob they gave themselves up to be bricked alive. Having lost all his four sons and harassed by enemies, for some time Gobind Singh was compelled to live a haunted life with a handful of followers. In 1705, on being asked by Aurangzeb to surrender, Gobind Singh wrote to him—‘a crafty and deceitful fox’—the famous *Zafar Nama*, ‘An Epistle of Victory’ in which he chided the Moghul king. “What is the use of putting down a few sparks when the flame is burning more fiercely than ever” The Guru reminded Aurangzeb that he had broken written promise to him and his followers of safe conduct from the fort.

After Aurangzeb's death things looked brighter for a little while. His successor Bahadur Shah received the Guru with honour at Agra. But he let go unpunished the rulers of Sirhind who had committed so many atrocities against the Sikhs and had failed to render justice. Gobind Singh then left for the South but when he reached Nanded, a Pathan hireling of the Nawab of Sirhind stabbed the Guru which proved fatal. At the age of 42 on 18 October 1708, Gobind Singh died leaving his people better knit and readier to sacrifice than he had found them.

#### Reading

Khushwant Singh     *History of the Sikhs*

# Ahilya Bai

(1725-1795)

In the most sober view that can be taken of character, she (Ahilya Bai) certainly appears, within her limited sphere, to have been one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever existed

—Sir John Malcolm

Self aggrandizement amongst the kings was a rule and benevolence towards subjects an exception in those times of turmoil. The subject people too were unconcerned as to who their king or queen was, this reflected in Tulsidas's saying through Manthara, a maid servant "Whoever be the king, how does it matter to me, for I will continue to be a maid servant and would not be a queen". Not so with Maharani Ahilya Bai, the Maratha ruler, the sheer mention of her name evoked reverence amongst people for her just rule and benevolence towards humanity.

Ahilya Bai succeeded to the Holkar jagirs (of Indore) in 1767 on the death of her 22 year old son Malerao, who had hardly ruled for one year. The family jagirs had been carved out by her father-in law Malhar Rao, a prominent Maratha leader, whose passing away a year earlier at Alampur near Jhansi, far from the capital, had left a power vacuum. Ahilya Bai not only stabilised the conditions and consolidated the territories but also brought prosperity and happiness to her people.

Ahilya Bai followed a policy of conciliation and resorted to coercion only as a last remedy. To preserve her possessions and territories she developed excellent relations with the Peshwa and the confederacy of the 12 ministers, including Nana Fadnavis and Mahadaji Scindia. She was opposed to Raghoba Dada who tried to play foul with her. The Nizam and Tipu Sultan respected her for her piety.

Ahilya Bai was born in 1725 in an ordinary family in a



village in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra Her father Mankoji Shinde married her at the age of 8 to Khande Rao, the only son of Malhar Rao Holkar She had from her very childhood a religious bent of mind which later helped her in administering her subjects with justice, piety and virtue Her husband died in a battle leaving behind a son, while she was only 29 Since time hung on the young widow, at her father-in-law's persuasion she interested herself in administration and manufacture of small armament When both her father in law and son died within a year's time of each other, she refused to be swayed over by the guidance of her minister Chandrachood who had his own ulterior motives She refused to adopt a child and took upon herself the task of administration She appointed one of the trusted men as the commander in chief of her forces who served her faithfully and zealously She permitted none to exploit her for being a woman Whenever occasion demanded she could be firm and unwavering and inflicted adequate punishment on malefactors She appreciated good work and was generous to a fault

Ahilya Bai was a woman of principles and believed in a strictly clean administration and justice She was pious and virtuous She created funds for charities but these were operated separately from the public funds and the two were never allowed to be mixed up In her daily life she started with her religious duties first and the affairs of state came next Her private life was spotless Every act was done under the guidance and fear of the law of God and with consideration of piety and virtue! She was popular with all her subjects, Hindus and Musalmans alike

\* Ahilya Bai passed away on 13 August 1795 Her charities in the far flung corners of the country—at the shrines in the Himalayas, at Rameshwaram and Dwarka at the sea-coasts, and at Varanasi and other places in the interior—have helped innumerable pilgrims and for these she is remembered even today

Mrs Joanna Bailie has written about the qualities of Ahilya Bai in her poems

Yea even children at the mother's feet  
Are taught such homely rhyming to repeat  
In better days from Brahma came

To rule our land, a noble dame,  
Kind was heart, and bright her fame  
And Ahilya was her honoured name.  
For thirty years her reign of peace,  
The land in blessings did increase,  
And she was blessed by every tongue,  
By stern and gentle, old and young  
And where her works of love remain,  
On mountain, pass, or hill or plain,  
There stops the traveller a while,  
And eyes with a mournful side,  
With muttering lips, that seem to say  
This was the work of Ahilya Bai

Reading

Grant Duff    *History of the Marathas*

# Tipu Sultan

## (1750-1799)

Tipu's mobility in war, his strong internal administration and above all his dream of a modern technological State make him stand out sharply from the shifting crowd of Indian rulers of his time  
—Denys Forest

Tipu was the only ruler of his times who from the beginning to the end saw where the British expansion was leading to and he never bent himself to the system of 'masked government'. He never accepted any subsidy nor did he enter into any form of alliance which could possibly compromise the independence of Mysore. Single-minded to his purpose, he never fell short in courage, aspiration and dream of a united, independent and prosperous Mysore. Tipu combined a distrust and even hatred for the British and made a tremendous impact on the political situation of India and abroad. He was remembered by his opponents for long. Three decades after his death, when another Indian, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, went to the U K, finding a person in dress like Tipu's in pictures, boys shouted after him 'Tipu, Tipu'.

Tipu Sultan was born on 20 November 1750 son of Hyder Ali and Fakhru'n-Nisa at Dewan Hillion in Karnataka. He took the name 'Tipu' after the saint Tipu Mastan Aulia with whose blessing he was born. Some also explain the name to have been derived from 'Tipu' meaning tiger which was his favourite symbol. Tipu had a sound scholastic education and military instruction and had the first taste of battle in a war with the Polygar of the West Mysore. He carried out an exploit by bursting upon the zenana of the Polygar. The result of the battle was obvious. But his father Hyder Ali returned the ladies and the territories in exchange for 50-camel loads of treasure. In 1766 Tipu led a diplomatic mission to Hyderabad and now onward he was actively associated with wars and in

fact grew up fighting the British. In a battle with them he laid waste Arcot. Future battles too were to see his valour. Yet in a battle with the Marathas, Hyder Ali and Tipu had to withdraw, Tipu's mode of escape being the disguise of a travelling mendicant.

At the age of 23 Tipu was married the same evening to two women, one of them the daughter of a saint and the other named Ruqayya Banu connected with a distinguished military family. However, warfare interested Tipu more than the harem. In a battle in 1778 at Pollinur he defeated the British forces. He gave the British under Braithwaite another defeat in 1782. These victories gave Tipu tremendous self confidence.

Hyder Ali died on 7 December 1782 'leaving behind the strongest and most united state in India'. And then from the plateau established by his father, 'Tipu ascended a summit of world importance by having strong internal government, impressive propaganda abroad and refusal to compromise with the enemies'. Immediately after the death of his father he had to proceed to Bednur which had been captured and looted by the British army. The British army found itself in a precarious position and capitulated. Tipu asked the officers to return the loot from the treasury. But they denied having taken anything. However, when their persons were searched and money was found hidden in their bodies, Tipu's anger knew no bounds and he had them marched off to the dungeons of Seringapatam.

The treaty of Mangalore brought on March 11 the four-year old Second Mysore War to an end. He treated ruthlessly his opponents, including collaborators of the British—Hindus who had conspired to bring back the rule of the Hindu dynasty, the Coorgis and the Malabar Christians. He forced many to be converted to Islam. After 1786 there was a lull. He busied himself with the routines of the government and with the innovations and experiments which distinguished his reign. He was fascinated by gadgets, learnt to adapt the technology of the Westerners to his own needs and took measures to modernise Mysore's industries and to introduce new ones. He invited foreigners—artificers and mechanics—to develop heavy industries, especially cannon founding, paper-making,

glass-manufacture, ship-building and luxury industries like silk, pearl. He set up silk worm centres. A commercial strategist, he tried to build up trade, particularly foreign trade. He banned commerce that might benefit his enemies. But he separated civil and military administrations and called upon Coorgis and the Malabar Christians to abandon their marriage customs.

Tipu tried to substitute his name for Padshah in *khutba* and even obtained a *firman* from Turkey. Through another emissary to Louis XIV of France he obtained vague promises of military help. But this had some funny interludes also. A physician from France felt Tipu's pulse and announced, "You are likely to become more bilious and your mind will be deranged" The man was re-exported to France on the next ship.

In 1786 wars were once again started. He defeated the Nizam's forces at Adoni. But from the Marathas he had to buy peace. His attack in 1789 on the Raja of Travancore led to the Third Mysore War. The British, the Nizam and the Maratha forces combined and though Tipu fought heroically, he lost that war. The treaty of Seringapatam reduced his territories, besides he had to bear the humiliation of handing over two princes as hostages to Cornwallis.

But Tipu was not to put up with this for long. He tried to cultivate France. Consequently suspicion grew and Wellesley marched against Tipu in 1799. Deceived by his own generals, Tipu died on 4 May 1799 defending his fort. It is interesting to know that before the battle he gave gifts to Mullahs and Brahmins.

One can read a prelude to the war of Seringapatam in a letter to Dundas from Wellesley written after six months of the war. "If you have a little patience the death of the Nizam will probably enable me to gratify your voracious appetite for lands and fortresses. Seringapatam ought, I think, to stay your stomach awhile, not to mention Tanjore and the Poligar countries. Perhaps I may be able to give you a supper of Oudh and the Carnatic, if you should still be hungry". "Voltaire had prophesied that Holy Patriotism would engender a daughter upon Reason, and that all barbarous despots would yield her their thrones. The daughter, need one say, was Liberty. Thra

Magi they hear of the marvellous event and hasten to abandon their false grandeur, their sceptres and their vainglory Their names ? Louis XVI, George III and Tiposaib'.

The British called Tipu a 'Monster of Cruelty' and accused him of being 'sanguinary, tyrant, gloomy, fanatical, cruel, oriental despot' Was he really so ? Perhaps the British view is an exaggeration and a reflection of his alleged maltreatment of the prisoners of war. It also shows his resentment and retaliation for the wrongs done, for instance at Bednur Says a British historian 'They are no greater than those of many tyrants before him—infinitely less than we have seen committed by the sophisticated rulers of our own day To these of course have to be added violent deaths, tortures and mutilations inflicted on people of his own race But even these do not bear the marks of blood, thirst or deliberate cruelty, they seem rather to be the work of a ruthless and suspicious personality, determined to make himself secure by whatever means came to hand' An incident to show his retaliatory spirit will be relevant In 1783 when the British forces attacked Anantpur, they even massacred civil inhabitants and threw their bodies in tanks The crowning atrocity according to Sheen, included "400 beautiful women, all bleeding with wounds from the bayonet, and either dead or expiring in each other's arms, while the common soldiers, casting off all obedience to their officers were stripping them off their jewels, and committing every outrage on their bodies Many of the women, rather than be torn from their relatives threw themselves into a large tank and were drowned " Though this account has been contradicted by many, it appears true that Tipu was acting in retaliation and 'candour must admit that the unjustifiable behaviour of the Company's army goes a considerable way in justifying that of the enemy'

Reading

Forster *The Tiger*

# Ram Mohan Roy

(1772-1833)

'Ram Mohan stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, theism. He was the mediator of his people harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and inevitable enlightenment. He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations. He embodies its freedom of inquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and shifted ethics, along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past'.

—Collet and Stead

**R**am Mohan Roy was born on 22 May 1772 at Radhanagar in Bengal in an orthodox family which had received some recognition in the service of the *Nawab Nazim* of Bengal. He was a precocious child, possessed of an inquisitive mind. Early in life he learnt a number of languages, followed the teachings of the *Upanishads* and for seven years wandered to seek truth. Then he entered the service of the East India Company and was Sheristadar to Dighy at Rangpur and acquainted himself with Western thoughts. In 1814 he returned to Calcutta and devoted himself to the service of the people. His next sixteen years were filled with tireless activity. He advocated the study of English language and of Western knowledge and thought. With his contacts with European liberalism he came to the conclusion that if India was to emerge from the slough of despondency then Hindu religion and practices would have to be reformed, preferably on the basis of the sources of Hinduism itself.

Ram Mohan found in the *Upanishads* the principle that

would produce a satisfactory solution to 'restore Hindu worship to its pristine purity' He argued that all religions tended towards monotheism and denounced the evil that had surreptitiously entered later day Hinduism, such as idolatry, polygamy, female infanticide and Sati He preached unity of God and Vedantism and refused to blindly obey the scriptures and traditions He said, "Let no one found conclusions on the mere words of the sastras By investigation without reason virtue is lost" On the other hand Ram Mohan used this very weapon of reason against the Western criticism of Hinduism His attitude towards the West was neither that of surrender nor of withdrawal or conflict, it was one of comprehension The West was only to supplement

Ram Mohan was well aware about the socio political situation of the country and said, "We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and abstinence from the slaughter even of animals as well as division into castes which has been the source of want of unity amongst us". His cosmopolitan views that were based on a study of Indian philosophy as well as Western cultures found expression in his Persian treatise *Tuhaft ul Muwahiddin* (A Gift of Monotheism)

Roy was not just a visionary His dynamic and persuasive personality attracted kindred spirits and with their assistance he formed the 'Atmiya Sabha' a forum for intellectual discussions He stood for the property rights of widows and daughters and attacked polygamy He vehemently criticised the system of prices for brides and condemned Sati on moral grounds But to his Hindu opponents, he gave a reply based on sacred Hindu texts Besides helping social and religious reforms, he also influenced the course of contemporary politics His nationalism, because of his intense love for humanity was broad based When some Spanish colonies became free and the French Revolution occurred in 1830, his joy knew no bounds and he celebrated the occasion by holding a dinner

In 1828, Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj where people professing different religions could worship God in a cosmopolitan house of prayer The Samaj provided intellectual sustenance to the middle classes which were then at cross roads although his work was too intellectual, untraditional and too



modern to influence the people in general. During his long public life, 'He laid down the main lines for advance for what was to become the Indian National Movement.'

Ram Mohan Roy was a Unitarian. His *Precepts of Jesus* was used by the Unitarians to reinforce their argument against Trinitarian Christianity and his Vedantism by Debendra Nath Tagore to refute the anti-Hindu attitude of the orthodox missionaries. Keshub Chandra Sen took his views on female emancipation and universal religion to expose the shortcomings of Hindu nationalism expounded by Adi Samajists, and moderates like Ramanand Chatterjee used his creative nationalism for supporting social reforms.

Roy was associated with the Press. He started periodicals like *Miratul Akhbar* and *Sambat Kaumudi* and he is regarded as the founder of serious Indian journalism. He also championed the freedom of expression of opinion and was perhaps the first constitutional agitator in the country. In 1823 he petitioned against the Press Ordinance.

In 1830 Raja Ram Mohan Roy went to England as an envoy of the Emperor of Delhi. He was taken ill and passed away on 27 December 1833. His achievements were substantial, he created the Samaj, enlivened people's interest in social reform and created a feeling of nationalism for which he is called 'the father of Indian recovery' and 'the first modern man of India'.

#### Reading

Ramananda Chatterjee     *Ram Mohan Roy and Modern India*

# Ranjit Singh

(1780-1839)

**R**anjit, among his subjects, has the character generally of a generous and kind master, and one of the best princes that have ever reigned in India. As evidence of his being a really good and amiable man may be cited his kindness to children and the fact of his never having, since he conquered the country, put a man to death for even the most heinous crimes, observed a foreigner about Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh was born on 13 November 1780 (according to some on 2 November) the son of Maha Singh, the Saker-chakia Jat Chief of Gujranwala, and Raj Kaur. In 1795 he was married to Mehtab Kaur, daughter of Sada Kaur, the widow of the Kanheya Chief Gurbax Singh who lost his life fighting Maha Singh. A farsighted and ambitious woman, Sada Kaur married her daughter to her enemy Mahasingh's son.

While young, Ranjit Singh evinced keen interest in field sports and the art of war. His fondness for marksmanship was so intense that when his father died in 1792 he exhausted all the 2000 rounds of shots that were left in the state, already beset with danger. For sometime the state was looked after by his mother Raj Kaur, Dewan Lakhpat Rai and Sada Kaur.

The theocratic commonwealth of the Sikhs at that time lay in ruin. The individual *misls* were weak and Ranjit Singh realized and rightly so that if one was to have a hold over Punjab, he would have to bring these *misls* under control, have a hold over Lahore, the political centre of Punjab as also over Amritsar, the religious seat. At this crucial time, the qualities of courage, enterprise and foresight that Ranjit Singh had inherited from his father stood him in good stead.

Ranjit Singh united all the warring elements together, transformed a rabble of horsemen into an efficient fighting

Ranjit Singh was not a despot. Once a few Pujaris came to his durbar. He was so much thrilled that he stepped down from his seat and wiped their feet with his beard. Another time when Akali Phula Singh condemned him for violating a canon during his visit to the temple at Amritsar, the Maharaja offered his naked back for punishment.

There are many incidents testifying to his directness.

"Why do they call this beautiful garden Shalamar?" he asked one of his courtiers. "Because, O noble one, the Persian word Shalamar means pleasing to the heart." "But this is Punjab, not Persia", exclaimed Ranjit Singh. "In Punjab, the word *Salamar* means the 'Killer of love' and in love one is kindled, not killed. Let it hereafter be called Salabagh, the garden of the beloved."

Dost Mohammed, the Afghan ruler wrote to Ranjit Singh "If out of haughtiness the Maharaja does not pay heed to my request, I will gird up my loins for battle and will become a thorn in the courtyard of your rose garden. I will muster my army of crusaders who know nothing except fighting unto death. I will create tumult on all sides and a scene of chaos everywhere." To him Ranjit Singh's reply was "We have broken the heads of refractory chiefs and put our foes in irons. If Dost out of avarice and greed desires to give battle with the small force he has, let him come."

The Maharaja was fond of army and his strongest passion was for horses. "One of these hit his fancy and he quite forgot all his state and ran out in the sun to feel its legs and examine it." He was susceptible to feminine charm and loved wine, and indulged in fiery potations which finally killed him. He breathed his last in 1839.

Although the weakest point about Ranjit Singh was that he could not prepare anyone to succeed him, which led to the decline of the Sikh power, yet it should not be forgotten that he created a state out of chaos. Also, it should be remembered that all his energies were concentrated in organising the State, consolidating his hold and ensuring that it remained intact. Intrigue and dissension, however, soon became the rule as the state fell apart immediately after his death.

#### Reading

Khushwant Singh *Ranjit Singh Maharaja of the Punjab*

# Thyagaraja

(1767-1847)

Thyagaraja is one of the famous trinity of Karnataka music, the other two being Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri, who popularised different styles of musical rendering from the standpoint of quality, output, introduction of new melody modes and the shaping of ideas in soul-stirring music, who can rank with Thyagaraja.

Centuries ago Jayadeva had laid down the foundation for the *kṛiti* form, and Purandara Das had distinctively contributed to the devotional basis for musical compositions. Thyagaraja enriched most of the Karnataka musical culture by his profuse musical output.

Thyagaraja was intensely devoted to his *iṣṭa devatā* Shyama who was for him a living presence and with whom he was all his life in immediate contact and not a deity living in far-off heaven. The devotion of Thyagaraja and his simple language have made his music so rich and appealing that even those not conversant with the language of composition are deeply moved when they hear his music.

Thyagaraja attained success by a happy blending of *raga*, *talā* and *śahitya* in his compositions. He chose, as if instinctively, the correct tempo and appropriate phase of *raga bhāva* which bring out the intended atmosphere of a composition.

Thyagaraja has handled a large number of *ragas*, including nearly 40 out of the 72 Mel ragas. To some of the *Mel artha ragas*, which had earlier nominal existence, Thyagaraja gave life and form, adequate for their expression. He also brought into life the *raga Karaharapriya*, one of the most popular *ragas*. He handled a large number of *Janya ragas*, and shaped many new *ragas* not handled before. Perhaps it was Thyagaraja who for the first time handled *raga Kuntalavarali*.

Thyagaraja covered a very wide field, from simple de-

votional songs suitable for group singing to highly technical pieces. He has also composed some soul stirring *Upakjanamas* and Puranic stories to musical setting. From the point of view of musical and emotional appeal, many of his simple and short compositions are the best.

On his Aradhana day, Pancharatna group of Kritis—five great compositions—are usually sung at the shrine at Tiruvaiyaru.

Thyagaraja's diction by itself was a class and for him language was a medium of musical expression. Some of the ideas embodied in his compositions are intensely poetic and the words themselves suggest the emotion. Quite a few compositions reveal his vast experience with various types of persons, others show his intimate mystic experiences, and few his sense of humour. All the nine forms of devotion are revealed in his compositions.

Thyagaraja was a bhakta musician, a scholar and a poet all rolled into one. This gives him a unique place in the history of Indian music.

Thyagaraja was born in 1767 at Tiruvarur in a Telugu family. Later he moved to Tiruvaiyaru on the northern banks of the river Cauvery where he spent most of his life.

Thyagaraja was a disciple of Rama Krishnananda and Venkataramanaiya and devoted most of his time in composing songs in the devotion of the God. But he was misunderstood and tortured by many, including his own brother. Later when his compositions gained fame many turned up to him and became his disciples and according to the musical styles of his composition, they are divided in three gharanas—Umayalpuram, Tillasthanam and Walajahpettai of which the first is the most prominent.

Thyagaraja died on 6 January 1847 at Tiruvaiyaru.

# Ghalib

(1797-1869)

The present day popularity of Gazal in all strata of society in North India owes much to Mirza Assadullah Beg, better known by his poetic name Ghalib. In a diction of his own Ghalib turned gazal, which had till his times been confined to 'love', into a multi purpose medium of expression for both personal and abstract thought. Ghalib in fact captured the emotional and intellectual ethos of his times and gave expression to some of the profoundest thoughts and feelings.

More than that Ghalib evolved Urdu into an effective medium suitable for modern poetry and prose. He did away with the highly involved expressions of erotic sentiments, stilted style and ornamental frills then in vogue in Urdu poetry. He gave Urdu language new dimensions and expressions.

Assadullah Beg was born on 27 December 1797 at Agra. At a tender age he lost his father and within a few years his uncle guardian also passed away. This brought the young boy face to face with life. The small pension given in lieu of his Jagir by the British hardly compensated the loss, a grudge which he bore all his life. When he came of age, he fought for redress but without success.

The vicissitudes in early life had hampered Ghalib's formal education. This fortunately was made up by coaching at home by able teachers. While young he was married to the daughter of Mirza Ilahi Baksh, a poet of distinction in the Moghul court which practically changed the course of Ghalib's life. He shifted to Delhi and through his father in laws courtesy entered into exclusive literary circles. Encouraged, he delved into literary efforts and read and wrote Urdu poetry in his leisure time.

To secure a larger share of his patrimony he visited Calcutta in 1826. But the visit was futile, tiresome and expensive and left Ghalib a bitter man. It had, however, its silver-lining. On his way he visited Lucknow and Varanasi, which gave him opportunities to acquaint himself with the contemporary literary trends. He returned to Delhi a sadder but a wiser and a more knowledgeable man.

The next few years witnessed considerable literary activity on Ghalib's part. His '*Diwan-e-Ghalib*', a collection of Urdu poems, appeared in 1841. This was followed by *Panj Ahang* in Persian in 1849. Ghalib's poetic works brought him close to the last Moghul emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar who appointed him in 1850 as his court historian. This association made Ghalib a suspect in the eyes of the British and in 1857 he had to pass through uneasy times. The poet has vividly described the conditions then prevalent in Delhi and of the people's sufferings at the hands of the foreigners in *Dastan Bu*.

The last few years of Ghalib were marred by poverty and bad health. The malaise was aggravated by his extravagant living. He found himself constantly in debt which he could not wipe off even with the generous help from the Rampur court. Even in this period of darkness, Ghalib retained his cheerfulness and humour as is evident from the letters he wrote to his friends and which appeared in collected form in 1868. Written in a direct, conversational style, these letters are vibrant with humour and present interesting details with an intimate touch. They also give a glimpse of the poet's life.

After a long and painful illness Ghalib passed away on 5 February 1869 :

Consumed by the agony of remembrance  
The remembrance of night's festive company  
The one remaining candle flickers and dies

In this symbolical expression, Ghalib records the passing of an age, a way of life and his own nostalgia for happier times gone by.

Three of Ghalib's gazals are given below :

*Were there no ugliness, beauty could not shine  
Bitter and sweet, beauty and ugliness are foils*

*and necessary opposites*  
*By contrast setting off each other's worth ,*  
*beauty with ugliness ,*  
*With evil good, with bitter sweet*  
*and with impure the pure*  
*The golden verdure is spring's verdigris, a foil*  
*to the mirror of its balmy breeze*  
*Which sets off and reflects its loveliness*  
 \* \*  
*Since sorrow follows joy*  
*An autumn does the spring*  
*Man must transcend the joys*  
*Of earth, which sorrows bring*  
 \* \*  
*Ill starred I am, but I thank God*  
*Ill natured I am not*  
*I bear no malice in my heart,*  
*Our fate I grumble not*

Firaq Gorakhpuri, another great Urdu poet, comments on Ghalib's poetry and says "His poetry is thought-packed, fancies that broke through language and escaped' There is the suggestive nature of his poetry He strikes the keynote and leaves the reader to make out the melody "



# Dayananda

(1824-1883)

"If the God cannot keep off a creature, how can He protect His devotee." So vehement was the reaction of child Moolshankar, who later became famous by the name of Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj movement, when he saw a mouse sitting on the deity's head. Dayananda was born in 1824 in a well-to-do family at Morvi in Gujarat. He received his early education from his father who was a strict disciplinarian and insisted on the child's observance of religious practices. But the child was too sensitive and rebelled when he was asked to observe the fast of Shivaratri. It was useless to worship a God who could not keep a mouse away, he felt. The incident left such a deep impression on him that later he turned a virulent opponent of idol worship.

Moolshankar proposed to his parents that he might be sent to Varanasi for higher learning. The proposal was received rather coolly and the boy was sent to a theologian in a neighbouring village. But when his parents arranged for his marriage and called him for wedding ceremonies, he fled from home.

Moolshankar wanted to quench his thirst for knowledge, so he took to saffron-coloured clothes, and became a sadhu and changed his name to Dayananda. For full fifteen years from 1845 to 1860, he wandered all over the country in search of knowledge and truth. The search for teachers and yogis took him to far flung places, including the innermost recesses of the Himalayas. After having studied deeply the Vedas and Sastras, for two years he waited on Vijñananda, a master spirit of the times, and then entered public life.

Dayananda preached one religion for all mankind based on moral principles enunciated in the Vedas which he consi-

truth. He acknowledged their authority and exhorted people to go 'back to the Vedas' and make the utmost of the Divine message. He had no faith in pantheism nor in polytheism and repudiated Puranic mythology but asserted that there could be no historical or temporal reference to the Vedas.

According to Dayananda God, soul and *prakriti* are eternal; God and soul, though distinct entities, are inseparable and related to each other as pervader and pervaded. God is immanent. The purpose of creation is the essential natural exercise of the creative energy of the Deity, for whose worship he approved of only selected forms e.g. *shruti*, *prarthana*, *upasana* and *prayaschit* (listening, prayer, worship and repentance).

Dayananda believed in *karma* and transmigration and thought that man with his will can make or unmake his destiny. He opposed superstition, hypocrisy, casteism, and idol-worship. Whereas he preached due respect for parents, he opposed ancestor worship. Dayananda said that ignorance was the root cause of all evils, sufferings and sins as also of transmigration or earthly bondage. The individual can attain salvation by freeing the soul from suffering, but it must be remembered that salvation is a temporary phase, after a time the soul assumes the body. It is wrong to say that there is *swarga* or *nark* (heaven or hell). *Swarga*, he said, is a state of happiness in which the soul lives as a result of its good actions and *nark* a state of pain. Similarly, it is wrong to say that there are *devas*—all that can be said is that some persons have more of the Divine than others. He preached that mutual activity is superior to passive resignation and that one should treat others as one would like himself to be treated.

Dayananda was a vehement opponent of casteism which he accused of having given birth to many evils in the Hindu society. On scriptural authority, he established that caste is based on actions and not on the chance of the birth of the individual—no one was born Brahmin or Sudra—Brahmin was one who did good and Sudra who did evil.

Dayananda founded on 10 August 1875 the first branch of the Arya Samaj at Bombay, this was followed by another branch at Lahore which developed into the centre of the move-

ment. He propounded his ideas in *Satyarthia Prakasha*, a commentary on the Vedas. The Arya Samaj preached reformative Hinduism based on the pristine purity of the Vedas. Dayananda was accused by some of preaching a militant version of Hinduism which is not correct. To quote the sage himself -

I believe in a religion based on universal and all-embracing principles which have always been accepted as true by mankind and will continue to command the allegiance of mankind in the ages to come. Hence it is that the religion in question is called the primeval eternal religion, which means that it is above the hostility of all human creeds whatsoever. Whatever is believed in by those who are steeped in ignorance or have been led astray by sectaries is not worthy of being accepted by the wise. That faith alone is really true and worthy of acceptance which is followed by *aptas*, i.e. those who are true in word, deed and thought, promote public good and are impartial and learned; but all that is discarded by such men must be considered as unworthy of belief and false.

What Dayananda was opposed to was conversion of Hindus to Christianity or Islam. It is, however, true that the Samaj accepted back to its fold those persons who had been converted to other religions, and in retaliation he was accused of proselytising and militancy. The fact, however, is that the Arya Samaj stood for social service and nationalism and contributed to the Hindu resurgence.

Dayananda laid stress on morality and upliftment of the individual. He observed

✓He alone is entitled to be called a man who possesses a thoughtful nature and feels for others in the same way as he does for his own self, does not fear the unjust however powerful but fears the truly virtuous, however weak. Moreover, he should always exert himself to his utmost to protect the righteous, and advance their good, and conduct himself worthily towards them even though they be extremely poor and weak and destitute of material resources. On the other hand, he should constantly strive to destroy, humble, and oppose the wicked sovereign rulers of the whole earth and men of great influence and power though

they be In other words, a man should, as far as it lies in his power, constantly endeavour to undermine the power of the unjust and to strengthen that of the just, he may have to bear any amount of terrible suffering, he may have even to quaff the bitter cup of death in the performance of this duty, which devolves on him on account of being a man, but he should not shirk it'

Dayananda was a great social reformer He opposed child marriage, favoured widow re-marriage, encouraged female education, set up girls' orphanages and widow homes and organized famine relief In his scheme of moral, religious and cultural regeneration of the masses, he gave propagation of learning a prominent place which resulted into setting up of Dayananda Anglo-Vernacular (D A V ) schools and colleges and *gurukulas*

The reforms propagated by Dayananda enraged orthodoxy Once he criticised the Maharaja of Jodhpur for living with a Muslim concubine , in revenge poison was administered in Swamy s food and of this he died The death he met was for a cause which flourished even after his death

#### Reading

B K. Singh     *Swamy Dayananda*

# Ramakrishna Paramahansa

(1836-1886)

“The sun light is one and the same wherever it falls but bright surfaces like water, mirror and polished metals etc can reflect it fully. So is the Light Divine. It falls equally and impartially on all hearts but the pure and clean hearts and the good and holy sadhus only can fully reflect it”—Max Mueller

Paramahansa reached a stage where religion mattered little. He said, “So many religions, so many paths to reach the one and the same goal”

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Indian and Western civilisations had come in close contact. As a reaction great many Indians came up and they ushered in a new spirit in India. Says Spear, the historian, “If Ram Mohan Roy was the mind, Dayananda the physical arm, Ramkrishna was the soul of the new India”. A very remarkable response came from Paramahansa to the closer contacts of the two civilisations. Ramakrishna had two ideals, one liberation, and two, service to God in man. He observed that there were differences in different religions and faiths. Even Vedanta had three different schools, namely, dualism, qualified monism and monism. Ramakrishna asserted that none of these schools was exclusive, these were only successive steps for an aspirant seeking oneness with God.

Ramakrishna taught and stood for understanding, reconciliation and friendship amongst mankind irrespective of their religion, customs etc. He believed in facing the situation and not in fleeing from the world as a cure from suffering and distress.

Ramakrishna, his family name was Gadadhar, was born son of Khudiram Chatterji of Kamarpukur, Hooghly district in Bengal in 1836. The family eked out its living from land

and supplemented the income from priesthood. When Ramakrishna was only 7, his father died and the burden of supporting the family fell on his elder brother, Ramakumar, who lived at Calcutta. The elder brother thought it might be good if Ramakrishna became a translator. But Ramakrishna had a highly devotional and mystical temperament and had no liking for the job. He joined the Dakshineswar Temple as a priest to goddess Kali, and the realization of the Divine became an irresistible passion with him. He practised great austerity and spent most of his time in prayers and contemplation, forgetting even his food and sleep. Such a behaviour was interpreted as madness by his relatives who to divert Ramakrishna's attention married him with Sharda Devi, a child of only 5.

That was in 1859 when Ramakrishna was 23. The marriage failed to divert Ramakrishna's interest in spiritual matters and Ramakrishna was always absorbed in his devotion and spiritual involvements. He learnt methods of realization of the Divine from Yogeshwari who was also known as Brahmani, practised the spiritual discipline of *tantras*, meditation for *samadhi* and the worship of God as the personal being. Another great soul, Totapuri taught him Vedanta, Upanishads and identity of Atma with Brahma which took Ramakrishna to the highest level of spirituality where religious differences lost their meaning. He experienced the essence of different religions and realised that these were like different paths that took their followers to the same goal.

His Guru Totapuri used to say, "A true seer of Brahman would see no difference between man and woman, and his purity of behaviour would be based, not on a sense of moral conflict but, on the super sensuous reception of unity." And, since Ramakrishna practised on this precept, even his wife's presence could not distract him from the path he had chosen for himself. Often in her very presence, he would go to the *samadhi*. Once she posed to him, "How do you look upon me?" His reply was that he looked upon her as "The mother who is the deity in the temple, the mother who gave birth to me and now resides in the Nahabat. I look upon you in that light—as the embodiment of motherhood." In 1875 Ramakrishna actually worshipped her as the divine mother and while the *puya* was coming to a close, both Ramakrishna and Sharda

Devi were completely absorbed in the *samadhi* and both realised the identity of their being.

A similar experience was reported by Vivekananda who had pressed Ramakrishna for the realization of the God. The disciple had asked him to arrange for the fulfilment of material needs of his family. Ramakrishna directed him to ask the Deity for the same. Thrice Vivekananda went and every time instead of material prosperity he requested Her for peace and enlightenment. He realised that a greater force which should be asked was only for worthwhile attainments. Renunciation and insatiable thirst for God were the characteristic features of Ramakrishna's life. And as time went on more and more devotees flocked around him and Ramakrishna soon became a living legend.

In 1885 Ramakrishna suffered from the cancer of throat and left his mortal body on 16 August 1886. The Holy Mother, as Sharda Devi had come to be known, and Vivekananda carried on his message through the Ramakrishna Mission. A few of his sayings are given here :

Man is like a pillow-case. The colour of one may be red, another blue, another black, but all contain the same cotton. So it is with man—one is beautiful, one is black, another is holy, a fourth wicked, but the Divine dwells in them all.

So long as a man calls aloud "Allah Ho ! Allah Ho !" be sure he has not found God, for he who has found Him becomes still.

So long as the bee is outside the petals of the lotus and has not tasted its honey, it hovers round the flower, emitting its buzzing sound; but when it is inside the flower, it drinks its nectar noiselessly. So long a man quarrels and disputes about doctrines and dogmas, he has not tasted the nectar of true faith, when he tastes it he becomes still.

When a man is in the plains he sees the lowly grass and the mighty pine-tree and says how big is the tree and how small is the grass. But when he ascends the mountain and looks from its high peak to the plain below, the mighty pine-tree and the lowly grass blend into one indistinct mass of green. So in the sight of the worldly man there are differences of rank and position, but when the divine sight is opened there remains no distinction of high and low.

Sugar and sand may be mixed together, but the ant rejects the sand and goes off with the sugar grain, so pious men lift the good from the bad.

Reading :

C. Isherwood : *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*

# Vivekananda

(1863-1902)

We have to learn yet that all religions, under whatever name they may be called, either Hindu, Buddhist, Mohammedan or Christian, have the same God, and he who derides any one of these derides his own God —Vivekananda

Vivekananda preached the universality of religion and insisted on its fulfilling social responsibilities. He said "I do not believe in a religion that cannot wipe out the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth," and "I consider the neglect of the masses a great national sin and that is one of the causes of our downfall." For Vivekananda religion meant removal of the sufferings of humanity and progress of the country. Devoid of social considerations religion for him was meaningless and poverty a curse.

When Narendrea Nath Datta (to give Vivekananda's secular name) was young, he had come across Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's observation, "If God is good and gracious, why then do millions of people die for want of a few morsels of food at times of famine." This always rang with bitter irony in his ears and was further accentuated when on the death of his father Vishva Nath Dutta, a well known attorney, Vivekananda found his family destitute.

Narendra Nath was born in Calcutta on 12 January 1863. From a very young age he had a leaning towards saintly life. In 1881 he met Ramakrishna and in the very first meeting the two had a liking for each other which with time developed into a close relationship. When the master died in 1886, his mantle passed on the disciple. Vivekananda took to a wandering life and travelled extensively all over the country. He conferred with holy men, visited sacred shrines, studied the scriptures, practised incredible austerity and under-



went severest possible ordeals. He preached Vedanta and tried to revive the true greatness of Hinduism. He infused amongst his compatriots a sense of pride in their religion and motherland and proclaimed that Vedanta was not limited to Hindus—it was a religion for all.

In 1893 Vivekananda went to the United States with a view to participating in the Parliament of Religions and expounding the tenets of Hinduism and Vedanta. But he had no credentials. All that he had and on which he could bank upon was a letter from Mr. Alcock, President of Theosophical Society. When he landed in the States he found even his entry in the Parliament difficult. Fortunately, with the help of Prof. J H Wright of Harvard and Mrs George W. Hale of Chicago he managed to get a seat amongst the galaxy of men who were to address the Parliament of Religions. But when he got an opportunity to speak on 11 September 1893, his very 'first speech rocked the Parliament to its foundations' and made him the idol of the American nation. An orthodox Christian observed, "That man, a heathen! and we send missionaries to his people. It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us." The Swamy was held by the New York Herald 'as undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions'.

Vivekananda preached a universal religion in all its diversity. He said, "Unity in variety is the plan of the universe. We are all men, and yet we are all distinct from one another. As a part of humanity, I am one with you, and as Mr. so-and-so I am different from you. As a man you are separate from woman. As a man you are separate from the animal, but as living beings, man, woman, animal, and plant are all one, and as existence, you are one with the whole universe. That universal existence is God, the ultimate unity in the universe. In him we are all one. At the same time, in manifestation, these differences must always remain. In our work, in our energies, as they are being manifested outside, these differences must always remain. We find then that if by the idea of a universal religion it is meant that one set of doctrines should be believed in by all mankind, it is wholly impossible. It can never be, there can never be a time when all faces will be the same. Again, if we expect that

there will be one universal mythology, that is also impossible, it cannot be. Neither can there be one universal ritual. Such a state of things can never come into existence, if it ever did, the world would be destroyed, because variety is the first principle of life. What makes us formed beings? Differentiation. Perfect balance would be our destruction. Suppose the amount of heat in this room, the tendency of which is towards equal and perfect diffusion, gets that kind of diffusion, then for all practical purposes that heat will cease to be. What makes motion possible in this universe? Lost balance. The unity of sameness can come only when this universe is destroyed, otherwise such a thing is impossible. Not only so, it would be dangerous to have it. We must not wish that all of us should think alike. There would then be no thought to think. We should not be all alike, as the Egyptian mummies in a museum, looking at each other without a thought to think. It is this difference, this differentiation, this losing of the balance between us, which is the very soul of our progress, the soul of all our thought. This must always be.

"What then do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean any one universal philosophy, or any one universal mythology, or any one universal ritual, held alike by all, for I know that this world must go on working, wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful. What can we do then? We can make it run smoothly, we can lessen the friction, we can grease the wheels, as it were. How? By recognising the natural necessity of variation. Just as we have recognised unity by our very nature, so must we also recognise variation. We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes. We must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints, and yet be the same thing. Take for instance the sun. Suppose a man standing on the earth looks at the sun when it rises in the morning, he sees a big ball. Suppose he starts on a journey towards the sun and takes a camera with him, taking photographs at every stage of his journey, until he reaches the sun. The photographs of each stage will be seen to be different from those of the other stages, in fact, when he gets back, he brings with him so many photographs of so many different

# Lokmanya Tilak

(1856-1920)

In a tribute to Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Of all the men of modern times, he captivated most the imagination of his people. He breathed into his compatriots the spirit of *swarajya*'. Tilak awakened the Indian masses to the meaning of *swarajya* (independence) and roused them to fight for it as their birth right.

Tilak's personality was multi faceted. He was a militant constitutionalist, a discerning scholar, an imaginative social leader, and a fierce critic of the foreign rulers. He was a leader of the masses and he devoted his entire life to public welfare. He was an able journalist and created public opinion on issues that affected the country and the people. A social reformer, he gave people a strong sense of identity. He was a serious scholar of Indian scriptures and brought forth his deep knowledge of Indian culture and ideals.

Tilak became, because of these diversified interests, a controversial figure. Whereas some educated Indians dubbed him as an obscurantist and a chauvinist, the British rulers persecuted him for his political activities. Yet, Tilak was a man of scruples and was never found lacking in moral courage, nor did he ever bow to threats. For creating a revolutionary spirit amongst Indians, he was called the 'Father of Indian Revolution'.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on 23 July 1856 in a middle class Brahmin family of Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. His father Gangadhar Ramchandra Tilak was a teacher and a well known Sanskrit scholar. From him, Bal acquired his love for learning and scholarship and a good knowledge of Sanskrit. Tilak's mother died when he was very young and he was brought up by his paternal uncle, Govindrao Tilak. After a short while his father also passed away. Death of his parents

left a scar on Tilak's young mind and he gradually developed a stoic attitude. Tilak was a brilliant student and while young, he charted out his career and resolved to immerse himself in public work.

In 1880 he along with his friends Chiplunkar and Agarkar established the Deccan Education Society with the avowed aim of inculcating patriotic spirit amongst students. The Society realised the importance of the Press for educating people, and started two newspapers, namely the *Kesari* and the *Maratha* of which in 1891 he became the sole proprietor.

Through his writings Tilak exposed the bureaucracy, awakened the masses and fired public enthusiasm against anything that challenged *swarajya*. The *Kesari* and the *Maratha* became a symbol of Indian nationalism. He clashed frequently with other learned personalities on matters raised in his thought-provoking articles. His writings agitated the British and thrice he was brought before the court.

Tilak's achievements in the sphere of public activity are numerous. In 1893, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council. He believed in using the floor of even this body for voicing his demand of Home Rule. In 1896, when Maharashtra was struck by famine Tilak was the first to carry out relief operations in an organised manner and again displayed his organisational skill by providing relief to the victims of a terrible plague that swept Poona and other cities. He also started a Paisa Fund. By the turn of the century Tilak was acknowledged as 'the uncrowned king of Maharashtra'.

To give the nation a sense of identity and idealise the cause of *swarajya*, Tilak promoted two festivals which are popular even today viz Ganesh Festival and Shivar Jayanti. These helped in providing intellectual, cultural, artistic and socio religious instruction and amusement to the people. But for introducing these festivals Tilak was labelled a religious fanatic.

Tilak reorganised the Indian National Congress from an innocuous gathering of retired officials and other public figures, who believed in extracting concessions from the British Raj by making appeals and sending petitions, into a powerful body with mass appeal which would pressurise the government to accept its demands. Tilak's whirlwind campaigns took him

all over India and the Congress dug deep roots amongst the people ; it led the national struggle for freedom. But because of his radical policies in 1907 the Congress Party split up. Tilak, who was the leader of the Nationalists, believed in militant agitation and was prepared to do anything to achieve Swarajya.

In 1908 Tilak was arrested on charges of sedition. In his defence, he spoke for over 21 hours. When he was sentenced to six years' transportation to Mandalay a wave of unrest lashed the nation. Markets closed instantly, workers in mills struck work for days, and entire Indian Press rose as one man ; even his detractors protested against the decision. Lenin who read of the happenings described them as revolutionary.

In jail, Tilak devoted himself to the study of the Indian classics and wrote his famous treatise on Gita, the *Gita Rahasya*. His other achievements as a scholar were two well known books, the *Oreon* and the *Arctic Home in the Vedas*. The latter was an original contribution to the theory of Aryan migration. Tilak dates the hymns of Rig Veda to 4500 B.C.

Tilak was released from jail in 1914. But six years of exile had not dimmed his popularity, he was accorded tumultuous reception throughout the country. For the remaining six years of his life Congress work occupied his attention. He organised resistance on the issue of prohibition and gave a call for the boycott of foreign goods. In 1918, he went to England to fight a case against Sir Valentine Cheroi for alleged defamation on his book *Unrest in India*. There besides contesting the case, he also tried to educate the British democracy on India's claim to Home Rule.

Tilak died on 1st August 1920 at Bombay. He did not live to see Independence but he had in Mahatma Gandhi an able successor to propagate his message of *swarajya*.

# Rabindranath Tagore

(1861-1941)

Rabindranath was the first writer of Asia to be awarded the Nobel prize. The year was 1912 and 'Gitanjali' the literary work for which the award was given. The story of the award itself is curious. During one of his visits to England, Rabindranath read an English translation of some of his Bengali poems to artist Rothenstein who read them to Yeats. Yeats read the poems to a gathering of English poets and writers, every one of whom was charmed by Tagore's ideas. The collection titled 'Gitanjali' (it literally means 'collection of songs') created an unprecedented sensation in the intellectual circles of the West. The young C F Andrews was so overwhelmed that he told the poet, 'I place myself at your disposal. May I dedicate myself wholly to your work?'

Rabindranath on return from the West felt that the good of mankind could be effected only by uniting the West's sadhana of work with the East's sadhana of the spirit in which India could give the lead. In 1918 he founded and dedicated everything to Vishwa Bharati which had as its motto "The truth is one and undivided though diverse may be the ways which lead us to it". Through separate paths pilgrims from different lands arrive at the same shrine of truth. Though laudable, the path leading to it was strewn with difficulties. He devoted considerable time to it and started several activities, including rural reconstruction at Sri Niketan so as to give the place beauty, peace and prosperity. During the years to come the Bharati fell short of funds and now and then the poet had to make constant efforts to find funds to keep the institution running.

Rabindranath was infused with patriotism. In 1886 he read a Bengali poem of his at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta. In 1905 he protested against the partition of Bengal. Although he was opposed to terrorism

and stood for peaceful cooperation, he opposed the brutal force of imperialism and in 1918, after the Jalianwalla massacre, renounced the Knighthood which the British had conferred on him. He wrote to the Viceroy, the Crown representative, that if in a subject country innocent and unarmed people were shot down, any honour bestowed by the rulers became unacceptable. His approach was rational. Nothing opposed to reason was acceptable to him. He disagreed with Gandhiji in drawing immature young men in the maelstrom of politics, as also Gandhiji's calling Bihar earthquake a punishment for the sinful attitude of caste Hindus towards untouchability. Tagore observed that if the Mahatma encouraged such superstitious attitudes it would be fatal for the country. But on another occasion when in 1932 Gandhiji fasted against untouchability in Yerwada jail, he appealed to his countrymen to listen to the Mahatma's sane advice and not to "be the cause of the death of a great man".

Rabindranath was the eleventh of the fourteen children of Debendranath Tagore and Sharda Devi. He was born on 7 May 1861 at Jorasanko in Bengal and grew up a dreamy and imaginative child. On the advice of his elder brothers, he started writing poetry which was acclaimed by the family and school teachers alike. The school could never attract him and most of his studies were done at home. He had a melodious voice and sang with as much ease as he could pen a poem.

The Tagore family was animated by a deep religious fervour, and love for literature, art, music and patriotism. At the age of 15, Rabindranath's poem "Banphul" and a critical essay appeared in Jhankar, a Bengali magazine, after which his writings regularly found a place in periodicals. At 16, he appeared at the stage and the next year he left for London for studies. But he could not stay there for long and came back. About this time his first drama 'Valmiki Pratibha' appeared. In 1883 he married Mrinalini Devi. Towards the end of 1890 he took upon himself the management of the landed estates and went to live at Shelaidah where he acquainted himself with the conditions of the poor peasant and developed interest in folk literature and folk music in which fields he did some pioneering work later.

Tagore's world of imagination was extensive and his

prolific creative powers touched every aspect of life—he produced poetry, stories, novels, essays, drama, music and paintings. “I am a man and nothing human can be alien to me”, said he. He wrote about 75 books, composed countless songs, wrote and directed plays and also played in them, and created Bengali dance-drama. His poetry transcended imagination but without lagging behind modern developments. Starting as a traditionalist, he incorporated elements from Western music, fused these with the Eastern music, and set to music songs composed by himself. He took to painting at the age of 70 and within ten years produced 3000 paintings. He made remarkable contribution to religious and educational thought, politics, social reform, moral regeneration and economic reconstruction also. ‘In stature, stride and sweep Rabindranath Tagore is an all round creative genius the like of whom has seldom been seen, if at all, in any country’, that is how Sukumar Sen, a historian of Bengali Literature introduces Tagore.

On 7 August 1941 at the age of 80, he died after a brief illness.

After independence one of Tagore's songs was adopted as India's national anthem. There could be no higher tribute than this to a poet from his countrymen.



# M. K. Gandhi

(1869-1948)

Generations to come, it may be, will scarcely believe that such a one as this in flesh and blood walked upon this earth —Einstein

Mohandas Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 at Porbandar where his father Karamchand was the dewan of the state. After his early education at Porbandar, Rajkot and Bhavnagar in 1888 Mohandas sailed for the U K to study law. His mother Putlibai, a deeply religious woman, permitted him to go abroad after he took a vow not to touch wine, woman or meat. Gandhi kept his promise. He returned to India in 1891 and tried to settle down at Bombay as a lawyer.

Gandhi was a shy person and his very first experience at the court was traumatic. When he rose to cross examine, he could think of no question to put to the plaintiff's first witness. He returned to the lady client, the fee he had received from her and hurried out of the court. In order to try his luck elsewhere he shifted to Rajkot but there too he faced a difficult situation when he tried to speak to an acquaintance, a British officer, in favour of his brother. The officer first politely tried to divert the subject but when Gandhi persisted, he ordered his servant to show Gandhi out. The incident changed the course of his life. He started looking for a change and when he received an offer to help prepare a case in Natal in South Africa, he grabbed the opportunity and in April 1893 sailed for South Africa.

But more shock awaited Gandhi while he was trying to board a train for Pretoria. He was thrown out of a first class railway compartment at the instance of white travellers, although he possessed and produced a valid ticket. When Gandhi learnt that this was nothing new for Indians he decided to raise his voice against the injustice meted by the Whites and to improve the conditions for the Indians. And, for this

Gandhi stayed there for 20 years much after the case that had brought him to Africa was amicably decided. He organised the Indians against racial discrimination and gained popularity amongst the people. This gave him self-confidence, moral courage and fearlessness. He fashioned Satyagraha (passive resistance) against the injustice and oppression of the South African government and its White people and prepared common man and woman to suffer under protest the consequences of legislation.

Gandhi studied other religions, especially Christianity and was influenced by the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin. The Gita also had a deep influence on him. By now he had become a well known figure in South Africa and when he left for India, Smuts commented 'the saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope for ever'. Gandhi reached India in January 1915 and on the advice of Gokhale, who considered him to be made 'of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made' and 'possessed of the marvellous spiritual power of turning ordinary man around him into heroes and martyrs', toured the country for one year. In May 1915 Gandhi established an ashram at Ahmedabad and within the next three years he participated in the peasant movements at Champaran in Bihar and at Kaira in Gujarat and in a labour dispute at Ahmedabad. These were successfully concluded and brought Gandhi in contact with masses.

In the political sphere Gandhi initially sympathised with the moderates and considered Annie Besant's Home Rule impractical. But when Annie Besant was arrested and martial law introduced in Punjab on 13 April 1919 resulting into the death of hundreds of unarmed persons, Gandhi changed his views, and from a loyalist he turned into a determined opponent of the government. He advised the Muslim population which was sore with the British Government for its dismemberment of the Caliphate to respond to oppression by non violence, non cooperation. The Indian National Congress adopted at its annual sessions held at Calcutta and Nagpur the Satyagraha programme and Gandhi emerged as the undisputed leader of the Congress and Indian nationalism. His gentle but compulsive personality too helped in his success. Also, Gandhi had a clear picture of the prevailing conditions,

he knew that India was to be freed from the British rule, 'in association with them, if possible, if not in opposition to them' He tried to instil among people self confidence and a sense of self respect and to improve their moral fibre In pursuit of these aims, he turned to be a social reformer also

Gandhi did not agree with those political leaders who urged the country's progress towards freedom exclusively through constitutional reforms He transformed the Congress into a fighting organisation by legitimate and peaceful means, such as boycott of the British textiles and government institutions But it was too much to expect masses to remain non violent and in fact they turned violent at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh, upset at this turn Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha He was tried for causing disaffection and sentenced to six years imprisonment The Hindu Muslim unity resting on the shaky foundation of the Khilafat movement gave place to communal riots, the programme of boycott of government institutions was virtually abandoned and most of the Swarajists decided at entry into the council

On 5 February 1924 Gandhi was unconditionally released from the Yervada Jail Shortly afterwards he was elected the President of the Indian National Congress For the next four years he devoted himself to constructive programmes and carried out several local Satyagraha movements To interest people in village industries, the Congress at his instance made in 1926 wearing of Khaddar compulsory for its members

To meet the prevailing political situation in India, the British government appointed the Simon Commission but it did so without consulting Indian opinion nor was any Indian made member of it The Indian leaders boycotted the Commission and the Congress demanded dominion status for India by a specified date But it did not evoke any response from London and the Congress declared at its Lahore session on 1 January 1930 independence of India as its immediate objective It also decided to start a civil disobedience movement, leaving it for Gandhi to decide its form and control Gandhi selected the Salt Laws for opposition and on March 12 led the famous Dandi March This was a strategic master stroke in that salt is a commodity of common use and the public in general felt drawn to the agitation Gandhi was arrested on 5 May 1930

and was released on 5 March 1931. Negotiations followed resulting into the Gandhi-Irwin Pact according to which civil disobedience was to be discontinued, the Congress was to participate in the Round Table Conference to draw up a federal constitution based on self-government, and the government was to withdraw ordinances and to release prisoners. The Salt Laws, however, remained unchanged. The Pact was ratified at Karachi in the plenary session which expressed its appreciation of the sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his companions. Earlier, Gandhi's efforts to persuade the Viceroy to commute sentences of Bhagat Singh and his companions had failed.

In the Round Table Conference held in London in September 1931, Gandhi 'with God as my guide', was the sole Congress representative. Since nothing came of it, the civil disobedience movement was renewed in January 1932 and Gandhi was again put behind the bars. The government let loose a reign of terror and announced separate elections for the depressed classes. Gandhi protested against separate elections and observed that such a move would vivisection and dissect Hinduism and further isolate the depressed classes, and said that he would fast unto death. Fortunately several leaders intervened and the crisis was averted by concluding the Poona Pact which provided reserved seats for depressed classes in the legislatures under joint electorate. Gandhi broke his fast on September 26.

Gandhi had always championed the cause of the so called untouchables and to change people's heart started a new weekly, Harijan. He said, 'Whether inside or outside prison, Harijan service will always be after my heart and will be the breath of life for me, far more precious than my daily bread.'

In October 1934 Gandhi resigned from the Congress and started at Sewagram, near Wardha, an enlarged constructive programme. He also set up an All India Village Industries Association.

In July 1937 Congress formed ministries in Bombay, U P, C P, Bihar, Madras and Orissa and a little later in N W F P. But when on 3 September 1939 Viceroy declared war with Germany dragging India into war without consulting Congress, Gandhi protested and Congress ministers resigned by 15

November, 1939. The Congress launched a Satyagraha in 1941 and tried to reach an agreement but the British Government thwarted every move. Churchill went on record, "I have not become the king's first minister to preside over the liquidation of the British empire." The Muslim League too was intransigent. When the Cripps Mission proposed what Gandhi called 'country's vivisection', he taunted that the offer was a 'post dated cheque on a failing bank'.

The AICC met at Bombay on 7 August 1942 and asked the people 'to do or die' and the British to 'Quit India'. The Congress leaders were thrown into jail on 9 August and in protest agitators cut off communications and destroyed government property. In 1944 Gandhi's life-long companion Kasturba died. When Gandhi observed a 3-week fast, the British Press was sarcastic about it. However, even General Smuts reprimanded them and said "It is sheer nonsense to talk of Mahatma Gandhi as a fifth columnist. He is one of the great men of the world." Gandhi was released in May 1944 and he tried to reconcile with Jinnah but because of the latter's stubbornness nothing came of it. In 1945 Wavell released all the Indian leaders and invited them to meet at Simla. But the parleys at Simla too failed. In March 1946 came a British Mission with a proposal to set up a constituent assembly to decide the future goal of India. Again the Congress and the Muslim League failed to reach an understanding and the latter to prove its strength launched a 'direct action' which took a heavy toll of human lives in Calcutta and East Bengal. Bihar too was a scene of violence and vandalism. The mass madness caused Gandhi deep concern. He proceeded to East Bengal to wipe 'every tear from every eye'. He lifted the issue of peace from the plane of politics to that of humanity. The visits helped restore order.

On the failure of the Cabinet Mission's plan as also of the Interim Government in June 1947, the new Viceroy Mountbatten proposed the partition of India before the transfer of power. Gandhi called it vivisection and in despair said, "Who listens, to me today—everybody is eager to garland my photos and statues. Nobody really wants to follow my advice." Finally power was transferred on 15 August 1947 to a partitioned country. India was independent.

Independence brought in its wake many problems also. Gandhi was sad at the uprooting of millions of people on both sides of the border. He succeeded in bringing in harmony to an extent. Mountbatten called him "One Man Boundary Force". From September 1947 for five months every evening Gandhi addressed the people and the government about their duties. A day before his death, he said, "The Congress in its present shape and form has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence". He also thought that Congress should be disbanded and its workers spread over the country to educate the masses.

Gandhi's solicitude for Muslims was deeply misunderstood. On 30 January 1948 he was shot dead by Nathuram Godse while he was on his way to the prayer meeting at the Birla House. His last words were "Rama, Rama". Thus the apostle of non-violence fell a victim to violence.

Gandhi's was the most dominant personality in the political scene of India from the end of World War I till his death. He had a complete sway over the Congress and the nationalist movement.

The appalling poverty of the Indian masses, especially in the villages, was what Gandhi ever kept in his mind. His programmes of rural reconstruction, basic education etc. were motivated by the same keenness to improve their lot.

To the extent, Gandhi's concern for the poor majority did not find practical expression at the hands of free India's government, such development as has taken place in the country, it is said, has benefitted mainly the well-to-do minority.

Reading .

D G. Tendulkar  
B.R. Nanda

*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*  
*Mahatma Gandhi*

# Aurobindo

(1872-1950)

'The manifestation of the supernatural upon earth is no more a promise (it is) a living fact, a reality. It is at work here and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.'—Mother

With the concept of 'Supermind', which emerged from his mystic experiences, Aurobindo gave Vedanta a new dimension. He was opposed to Sankara's illusionism of reality and said that all reality was infused with the absolute spirit (Brahman) and that, secondly, lower forms evolved into higher forms or vice versa. Under the circumstances it is for man to try to pass beyond the realm of the mental to the supramental, from the mind to the spirit, and thus achieve identity with the Absolute. The mind life of man should therefore be prepared to receive the Divine inner life on earth by complete transition from worldliness to the realisation of spiritual nature, or the dominance of spirit over the physical and mental life. Man should be motivated by the spiritual essence of all reality.

Man can achieve identity with the Absolute through integral yoga which does not merely help the inner experience of the divinity but also recreates the whole being—mind, life and body; it remoulds both the inner and outer existence and gives him a mystic vision. This is how man may prepare but it is only through the grace of the Supreme Being that he can achieve his ultimate destiny.

Aurobindo further says that the spirit gives a call of love to fellow beings and spirituality consists in eliminating the 'ego sense' or in surrendering to the Divine power. But this does not mean running away from the normal conditions of life. The mystic thus brings together harmony between man and society.

Aurobindo was born on 15 August 1872 at Calcutta, the

third son of Swarnalata Devi and Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose who championed Western education and sent all his sons abroad for their education. Aurobindo received education at a grammar school at Manchester, the St Paul's in London and, Kings College, Cambridge, where he was a brilliant student. He creditably passed the coveted I C S examination, but as he did not go for the riding test, he was disqualified for the civil service. In 1893, Aurobindo left Britain for India but by the time he reached Indian shores, his father had died of the shock from an incorrect news that his son had been a victim in a shipwreck. Aurobindo was deeply distressed.

Aurobindo joined the State service at Baroda and was there from 1893 to 1906. During this period he engaged himself in intense literary activities, married Mrinalini Devi, and took stock of the country's political situation. He wrote a series of articles under the pen name 'Indu Prakash' and in 1904 and 1908 attended sessions of the Indian National Congress. He gave a lead to the extremist group, undertook a tour of Bengal to assess the people's reaction to the partition of Bengal and finally in 1906 left Baroda for Calcutta where Aurobindo threw himself headlong into the nationalist movement. Besides, he was also interested in Yoga and mysticism and in 1906 received instructions from one V B Lele of Gwalior. In 1908 disturbed by his activities, the British authorities arrested Aurobindo but when he was tried, the charges could not be sustained and Aurobindo was acquitted. Knowing well the ways of the British rule Aurobindo apprehended arrest and forewarned his countrymen about the country's political situation and advised what they should do in case agitators like him were removed from the scene. All this while his yogic experiences could not proceed without dislocation. He, therefore, left Calcutta for Chandernagore and after a short while moved to Pondicherry which was to be till his death in 1950, the centre of his philosophical, spiritual and mystical activities.

In 1914, Aurobindo met two visitors from France, one of these was Paul Richard and the other a lady who was later to become famous as the Mother of Pondicherry. Together they started a journal 'Arya'. During the course of a few years there also grew around Aurobindo an *ashram*, a centre for



truth-seekers. In 1920 the French lady returned to India to settle down in Pondicherry. Six years later when Aurobindo withdrew into seclusion to concentrate on his work on the descent of the Supermind, the *ashram* passed to her charge and gained a world-wide reputation. Among Aurobindo's several literary and philosophical works is *Savitri*, a unique testament of his personal faith.

Aurobindo is one of those rare mystic philosophers who gave man a message, a means and a hope of further evolution.

Reading .

R R Diwakar    *Aurobindo*

# Jawaharlal Nehru

(1889-1964)

**I**t is the condition of life to have problems Only the dead have no problems—Nehru

To Jawaharlal Nehru the 1912-Banipur session of the Indian National Congress, which he attended on his return from the U K , looked 'very much an English knowing upper-class affair , the moderate nationalists behaving more like a loyal opposition than a freedom movement ' For him this and the passionless world of law which he now faced was quite depressing Seventeen years later on the midnight of the last day of 1929 at the Lahore session of the Congress he gave his countrymen an inspiring message

Independence for us means complete freedom from the British domination and British imperialism Success often comes to those who desire and act, it seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of the consequences

And answering this call, the people pledged themselves on 26 January, now celebrated as Republic Day of free India, as follows

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of many other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life that they may have free opportunities of growth

And the same Jawaharlal Nehru inspite of having suffered seven terms of intermittent imprisonment by the British rulers, advised the people of India after she became free not to sever the bonds with the British Commonwealth, for he pleaded in the longer run it could prove good for the country and the world A very complex personality, but beneath all his actions lay his devotion to his country and its people For 17 years he was India's uncrowned king as well as first servant

Jawaharlal was born at Allahabad on 14 November 1889, the son of Motilal Nehru, a successful, leading lawyer, and Swarup Rani, Kashmiri pandits. He was brought up in luxury. After his early education at home by a series of tutors, Jawaharlal was taken by his family to England where he entered school at Harrow. Two years later he moved to the Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1910 he took his honours in Chemistry, Geology and Botany. After another two years at law, he returned a full fledged lawyer 'to discover' his India. His political ideas had till then remained vague—'his nationalism stemmed from emotion rather than conviction'.

A first impression at Bankipur, followed a little later by the division between moderates and others, the Lucknow Pact which brought together the Hindus and the Muslims, marriage with Kamla in 1916, and the birth of Indira Priyadarshini—these are the other small landmarks of his life in the twenties. In 1916, he had a casual meeting with Gandhi which was to change the course of his life. Nehru felt that Gandhi was carrying the masses with him. The Jallianwalla tragedy at Amritsar melted the indifference of the intelligentsia and gave an impetus to the national movement. Motilal was converted to the beliefs of his son and of Gandhi and after sometime he threw himself into the movement.

On 19 November 1921 the Government declared Congress an illegal organisation and arrested Motilal and Jawaharlal. Both were tried and sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment for their participation in satyagraha. The Nehrus however expressed themselves against the withdrawal of the satyagraha by Gandhi on the occurrence of mob violence at Chauri-Chaura. But when later Gandhi was also imprisoned, Nehru was disturbed. He picketed shops selling foreign cloth and was arrested on a charge of intimidation, extortion and sedition. Nehru was awarded six months' imprisonment. He said 'I shall go to jail again most willingly and joyfully'. About this time a split occurred within the Congress. Shortly after Nehru became the secretary of the Congress Party.

In 1927, Nehru paid a short visit to the Soviet Russia which fascinated him and he felt it had a message of hope for the world. On return to India he was elected President of the AITUC for 1928. The British rulers were busy all the while

to divide and rule by repression The Simon Commission's visit drew nothing but peoples' anger who demonstrated everywhere against them. Nehru too had his share of the lathi blow, he and Govind Vallabh Pant were badly hurt.

While in prison at Calcutta Jawaharlal heard that Gandhi had decided to abandon satyagraha and approved of Congressmen contesting seats in the legislatures, and engaging in nation-building activities. Nehru's reaction was sharp and quick. He felt that Gandhiji's decision was 'an insult to the intelligence and an amazing performance for a leader of national movement'. He felt cut away from Gandhiji and very lonely. 'One must journey through life alone, to rely on others is to invite heart break'. Was it this experience that subsequently led to Nehru's increasing isolation from his colleagues?

In June 1937, Congress formed ministries in some provinces. Nehru criticised this but bowed to the majority decision. Two years later the Viceroy declared India a belligerent nation at war with Germany over democracy and freedom. Nehru questioned 'whose freedom' and the Congress withdrew from the provincial ministries. The government arrested most Congressmen. Nehru was sentenced to four years but was released on December 1941. Eight months later when Gandhiji called upon the country to 'do or die', Nehru and many other prominent leaders were arrested on 9 August 1942. Nehru was sent to Ahmednagar jail. He spent his time in writing, and completed his '*Discovery of India*'. In 1945 he was released. He opposed as a defence counsel the trial of the Indian National Army earlier formed by Subhash Chandra Bose. Though convicted, the INA men were released.

After a brief experience in the Interim Government and greatly saddened by the tactics of the Muslim League, in 1947 Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel reluctantly accepted the Mountbatten plan for the partition of India.

Nehru said, 'By cutting off the head we should get rid of the headache'. On the night of the 14th August, Nehru made a moving speech, "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially." Nehru was now the first Prime Minister of free India. The Hindu-Muslim riots in the wake of partition had been nightmarish

for him and when on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was shot dead by a Hindu fanatic, Nehru broke into tears. The mantle of Gandhi now fell on his shoulders and the Nehru-era had begun.

On 26 January 1950, India became a sovereign democratic republic. Two years later India held her first general elections, in which the Congress under Nehru's leadership triumphed. Yet the government faced immense problems. A vast population growing at the rate of some five million a year, grinding poverty, constant food shortages, an age old agricultural system, lack of industrial base and innumerable other problems came in the way of raising the living standards of the people. Nehru's goal was to set up a modern socialist state. A Planning Commission, Five Year Plans, Community Development and so on were organised. The pace of growth was not as smooth and fast as it ought to have been because of the lack of a loyal band of workers. Nehru shaped the country's foreign policy based on Panch Shila which raised her prestige in the international world. It helped the slow building of peace with positives visible in Korea, Indo China and Western Asia. But unfortunately, India was betrayed by the Chinese—in 1962 China attacked India.

Nehru stood all his life for communal harmony and goodwill. He truly treaded on the footsteps of Buddha, Asoka and his own mentor Gandhi. He said, "We must always remember that every Indian to whatever religion he might belong is a brother and must be treated as such." He offered Pakistan a "No war pact". But Pakistan, founded on communalism, failed to grasp his hand of friendship and tried to usurp Kashmir by force of arms. Though this figured in UN so often, it has remained unsolved because of the partisan approach of the Western powers. It was maliciously told that Nehru held on to Kashmir because he was a Kashmiri. It is forgotten that Nehru had agreed to a plebiscite in Kashmir on the condition that Pakistan withdrew its *entire* forces, with India withdrawing the *bulk* of her forces. Pakistan, the aggressor, never fulfilled this condition. Also, Nehru had taken the case to UN because he had faith in that august body. Little did he think that power blocs would balk India's request for vacation of Pakistani aggression.

Betrayal by the Chinese was one of the worst experiences of Nehru's life and, after the military humiliation in NEFA and Ladakh, his health was shattered. The divisive pressures from within the Party, the burden of government and his own ambitious cabinet members finally broke his spirit. On 27 May 1964 he died after a brief illness which had been brewing for several months.

Bertrand Russel exclaimed on hearing of Nehru's death :  
"I hope those who damned him while he lived will not try to embrace him in the name of all things he loathed "

Reading -

Seton *Pandita*

B.R. Nanda *Nehru*

## NOTES

### 1. Siva

- (i) Some of Siva's names are Mahadeva, Paramesvara, Mahesvara, Sankar, Mahayogi, Mahakal, Pasupati, Nataraja, Chandrasekhar, Gangadhar, Nilkantha, Ardhanarisvar, Kalyanasunder, Lakulisa
- (ii) Sati, unable to bear the trunts of her irate father, Daksha against Siva whom he had refused to invite for the sacrifice, immolated herself in the sacrificial fire. Grieved at the loss of her beloved, Siva withdrew into himself. Sati, reborn as Uma daughter of Himavan, took to penance to be united to Siva. Disturbed by this, Siva appeared before her, disguised as an old Brahmin, and learning of her secret love, denounced Siva with sarcasm. But nothing could deflect Uma and she won him finally.
- (iii) When the primordial ocean of milk was churned by the *devas* and *asuras*, it yielded up great treasures for which they competed with one another. But when *halahala* (poison) rose, they were all terrified and prayed Siva for protection. Siva swallowed the poison and froze it in his throat. Since then he is the blue throated Nilkantha.
- (iv) Siva is also called Gangadhar. When the Ganga was to descend on the earth, due to Bhagiratha's penance there was consternation that its impact might upset the balance of the earth. In answer to the prayers of gods, Siva received the mighty river in his matted and winding locks and Ganga turned to a more beneficent mood.

### 2. Patanjali

*Hathayoga* After Patanjali new branches of yoga emerged. Of these Hathayoga is important. According to Hathayoga, two channels (nadis) namely Ida and Pingala run from their base (*muladhar*) along the right and left sides of the back bone towards the nose. Along the backbone are 6 centres (*chakras*) located in *muladhar* (sacral region) *swasthusthan* (lumbar) *manipura* (naval region) *snahrit* (near the heart) *visuddha* (throat), and *aajna* (opposite the junction of eye-brows). The *sushumna*, a very fine channel, extends in the centre of the back bone to the head.

During *pranayam* breathing becomes more and more infrequent and the wind (*pran*) withdraws itself from the mouth to *Ida* and *Pingala* and by their pressure on *muladhar* the pent up and coiled *kundalini* is awakened. In the successive stages of yoga their energy rises up through *su humna* and the six centres and goes upto the centre in the head. When this happens, the yogi attains *illumination*.

### 3. Prithviraja

- (i) Alah and Udai, sons of Banafar, were commanders in the army of King Parmar of Jejatabhukti. The king grew suspicious and dismissed them. The two brothers were recognised very brave and had no difficulty in securing positions under Jayachandra of Kanauj. Shortly afterwards on being attacked by Prithviraja Chauhan, Parmar sent a message to Alah and Udai to come back. Remembering their initial insult, they refused to go. Their love for their motherland however triumphed and they returned to Mahoba and fought the battle bravely. But that was a fight against a very strong force and the two brothers sacrificed their lives.
- (ii) The bards narrate a romantic story about the marriage of Prithviraja with Sanyogita, the daughter of Prithviraja's rival Jayachandra of Kanauj. The princess entertained a secret desire to become the consort of Prithviraja and secretly carried on correspondence with him. When Jayachandra called an assembly of princes for the selection of a bridegroom by his daughter, he excluded Prithviraja from amongst the invitees. Not only that, he placed the Chahaman king's statue at the entrance of the hall as a door-keeper. Sanyogita did not select any prince and moved to the door where, to everyone's surprise, she garlanded the statue of Prithviraja. The Chauhan king, who was hiding near-by with his attendants, rushed to the spot and rode off with the princess. Jayachandra's army pursued them in vain, Prithviraja safely reached his capital and married the Gahadawal princess.
- (iii) It is said that Ghuri took Prithviraja prisoner to his capital and asked him to shoot blind fold at a target, as Prithviraja was famous for shooting blind fold at the spot where from a sound originated. Chand Berdai, who was also taken prisoner and was present, gave the directions about the spot where Ghuri was sitting and Prithviraja shot the Sultan dead. Thereafter he killed Chand Berdai and himself.

### 4. Vaishnavites

Besides Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Vallabhacharya are two other prominent Vaishnavites. Nimbarka propounded Bheda-Abheda according to which the devotee has to realise that there is no distinction between Krishna and Radha. Vallabhacharya propounded Shuddha-advaita (pure non-duality). An exponent of Krishna cult, he advocated renunciation of the world and insisted on complete identity of both soul and world with the supreme spirit. Vallabha introduced an element of passion in the idea of *bhakti*. The devotion of Radha passes through various stages based on love making. Later this led to gross eroticism and affected the social and moral tones of the people.



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## Glossary

<i>Adigrantha</i>	: the first sacred book of the Sikhs
<i>advaita</i>	: non-dualism
<i>agnihotra</i>	: one attending to sacrificial fire
<i>ahimsa</i>	: non-violence
Allah	: the Almighty God
<i>amsha</i>	: part
<i>anand</i>	: bliss, delight
<i>aparigraha</i>	: freedom from covetousness
<i>apurva</i>	: transcendental potency—the result of an act in the form of an unseen force
<i>artha</i>	: wealth
<i>Arthasastra</i>	: a compendium of political thought   Kautilya
<i>asan</i>	: posture of body
<i>Asoka vatika</i>	: the garden of Ravana
<i>ashram</i>	: the place of a sage
Ashtachhap	: a group of eight poets, followers   Vallabhacharya
<i>asuras</i>	: evil spirits, demons, enemies of the god
<i>asvamedha</i>	: horse sacrifice. If performed 100 times the sacrificer obtains the rank of Indra the king of heavens.
<i>atma</i>	: soul
<i>avatar</i>	: incarnation of a deity
Baisakhi	: the first day of the year in North India
Bhagvadgita	: Celestial song—Krishna's message Karma to Arjuna
<i>bhakti</i>	: devotion
<i>bhavas</i>	: emotions
Brahma	: the creator
Brahmana	: parts of the Vedas e.g. Satpatha—a part

	of the Rîg-Veda ; absolute reality
<i>brahmacharya</i>	• celibacy
Brahmin	: the first caste of the Hindus
<i>Chandala</i>	• a schedule caste
<i>chaitya</i>	• Buddhist temple
<i>chit</i>	• mind, absolute
Deepak	• a rag ; a style of Hindustani music
<i>dham</i>	<i>centres of religion and pilgrimage</i>
<i>dharma</i>	• religion, duty, righteousness which keeps man on the right path
<i>Dhrupad</i>	: a rag, a style of Hindustani music
<i>digambara</i>	• a sect of Jains
<i>digvijaya</i>	conquest of the four corners of the world
Din-Ilahi	: a liberal religion propounded by Akbar
Diwali	• the feast of lights, a festival of the Hindus
Diwan-e-Am	: place of public audience
Diwan-e Khas	• special chamber
<i>doha</i>	• a couplet of Hindi poetry
<i>durbars</i>	courts
<i>fakirs</i>	• a Muslim devotee, poor
<i>firman</i>	• order
<i>gazal</i>	: a form of Urdu poetry
<i>Ganpath</i>	• a collection of words following the same grammatical rule
Giridhar Gopal	: Lord Krishna who lifted a mountain on his fore-finger to save his people from the downpour caused by Indra's wrath
<i>gotra</i>	• family, lineage
<i>guru</i>	teacher, preceptor
Granth Sahib	the sacred book of the Sikhs
<i>gyani</i>	• a man of knowledge
Indra	• God of rains
Isvara	: God, the Almighty
<i>Jagir</i>	: estate, hereditary assignment of land
Janpada	: republic
<i>jina</i>	: conqueror of human passion
<i>jnana</i>	: knowledge
<i>lachchha</i>	: under garment
<i>kala</i>	: time

<i>kanalya moksha</i>	liberation of the soul
<i>kama</i>	love, sex
<i>Kands</i>	parts of a book of poetry
<i>kanga</i>	comb
<i>kapha</i>	one of the three humors
<i>kara</i>	iron bangle
<i>karma</i>	act, action, duty
<i>kavittas</i>	a form of poetry
<i>kazi</i>	civil judge (Islam)
<i>kesh</i>	hair
<i>khiadi boli</i>	language spoken in north-western U P
<i>khande da palul</i>	a ceremony of the Sikhs
<i>khutba</i>	religious order
<i>kirtan</i>	devotional music
<i>kshatriyas</i>	the second caste of Hindus, military and regal caste
<i>kirpan</i>	sword
<i>lila</i>	playfulness, illusion
<i>linga</i>	the male organ, a symbol of Siva in stone or marble, worshipped all over India
<i>Lokayata</i>	a system of atheistical philosophy
<i>Madhuparva</i>	a festival of the Aryans
<i>Madhyamic</i>	a school of Buddhism
<i>Mahabharata</i>	an epic on the legendary Kauravas and Pandavas It is a comprehensive commentary on human conduct
<i>Mahayana</i>	a chariot for larger number of people, a school of Buddhism
<i>man</i>	mind
<i>mandap</i>	canopy
<i>mantra</i>	a chant
<i>mara mara</i>	reverse of Rama Rama
<i>masjid</i>	mosque
<i>mathas</i>	buildings where Hindu religious mendicants reside under a supervisor
<i>maya</i>	illusion
<i>mithya</i>	false
<i>moksha</i>	liberation of the soul, exemption from further transmigration
<i>mukti</i>	final liberation of the soul

Namadheyas	a ceremony of giving name to a child
Nath	a sect of Hindu sanyasins
Natya	drama
Natyasastra	dramaturgy
<i>nidhi</i>	treasure
Nirgranthas	followers of Jainism
<i>Nishkama Karma</i>	
<i>Yoga</i>	doing duty without expecting benefits
Nitisastra	ethics
<i>niyam</i>	external control
<i>niyoga</i>	the practice of begetting a child by appointment
<i>nirivritti</i>	detachment
Padshahi	kingship
<i>partantra</i>	dependent
<i>fatwa</i>	religious order
<i>pitakas</i>	Buddhist books
<i>pitris</i>	fore fathers
<i>pitta</i>	one of the three humors
<i>prakriti</i>	nature
<i>pramana</i>	testimony
<i>pran</i>	life
<i>prasasti</i>	praise
<i>pravritti</i>	attachment
pujaris	priest
<i>Puranas</i>	ancient literature
<i>purusha</i>	person as opposed to <i>prakriti</i>
Purva Mimansa	a system of Hindu philosophy
Raga mela	a Rag, musical style
<i>rakshasas</i>	enemies of the Aryans who disturbed sages in their penance
Rajasuya	royal consecration
<i>rasas</i>	sentiments
<i>Ram Nam Jap</i>	chanting the name of Rama
Ramayana	The poem on Rama
<i>rajas</i>	one of the three qualities associated with kshatriyas
<i>sabda</i>	testimony in the form of word
<i>sadhana</i>	devoted performance
Sagara	ocean, a king who brought Ganges to

	the earth
<i>saguna</i>	a sect of Vaishnavas
<i>sahitya</i>	literature
<i>Saivism</i>	the cult of Siva
<i>Saivite</i>	followers of Siva
<i>Saktism</i>	devotion to Sakti (power)
<i>sama-drishṭi</i>	one who treats everyone alike
<i>samadhi</i>	attentive, self realisation
<i>Samhita</i>	a treatise generally named after its author e g Charaka Samhita
<i>sansar</i>	world
<i>sangha</i>	a group of Buddhist mendicants
<i>sanyasin</i>	one who has resigned from the world
<i>sardars</i>	chieftains
<i>Sardeshmukhi</i>	a tax levied by Marathas on other rulers
<i>sastras</i>	Hindu scriptures
<i>sastric</i>	in accordance with sastras
<i>sat chit ananda</i>	truth absolute bliss
<i>sati</i>	a wife who burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband
<i>sattva</i>	truthfulness
<i>sheristadar</i>	an official
<i>shikhara</i>	top
<i>siddhis</i>	possession of superhuman powers
<i>Sikh</i>	a disciple follower of Sikhism propound- ed by Nanak
<i>śila</i>	stone
<i>śilsila</i>	tradition
<i>ślokaś</i>	a form of Sanskrit poetry
<i>Smṛiti</i>	a body of the recorded or remembered law, the ceremonial/legal institutes of the Hindus, e g Manusmṛiti
<i>śraddha</i>	an obsequial ceremony in which food and water are offered to the deceased an- cestors of the sacrificer
<i>stupa</i>	a Buddhist monument in the form of solid dome
<i>Sudras</i>	the servile class of the Hindu outcastes
<i>sufi</i>	a sect of Mohammedans
<i>sutra</i>	a brief rule, an aphorism

<i>swarajya</i>	: independence
<i>swayamvara</i>	: the practice of public selection of a husband from amongst suitors
<i>Syetambara</i>	: a Jain mendicant who wears white garments
<i>tal</i>	: musical time or measure
<i>Tandava</i>	: vigorous dance by Siva in contrast to Parvati's graceful <i>Lasya</i> dance
<i>tantric</i>	: a set of works inculcating mystical and impure rites in honour of different forms of Siva and Durga.
<i>tapas</i>	: penance, devotion
<i>tri-doshas</i>	: three humors
<i>Upanishads</i>	: philosophical treatises of Hindus
<i>vairagya</i>	: renunciation
<i>Vaishnavite</i>	a follower of Vaishnavism
<i>Vaisyas</i>	: the third caste of the Hindus, engaged in agriculture, trade etc.
<i>vatsalya</i>	: affection
<i>Vayu</i>	: one of the three humors
<i>Vedas</i>	: the four chief scriptural authorities of Hindus, namely, Rig, Yajur, Atharva, and Sam
<i>vidhi</i>	: rule, precept
<i>viharas</i>	: residence of Buddhist monks
<i>virudas</i>	: songs in praise
<i>Vishnu Purana</i>	: Puranas are history books of Hindus of the ancient times. Vishnu Purana is devoted to the glory of Vishnu.
<i>vititi</i>	: subsistence
<i>yajna</i>	: performance of a sacrifice
<i>yam</i>	: control
<i>Yan-Chowang</i>	: a Chinese pilgrim who visited India
<i>yoni</i>	: the female organ. It forms the lower part of Siva linga.
<i>zenana</i>	: ladies' apartment